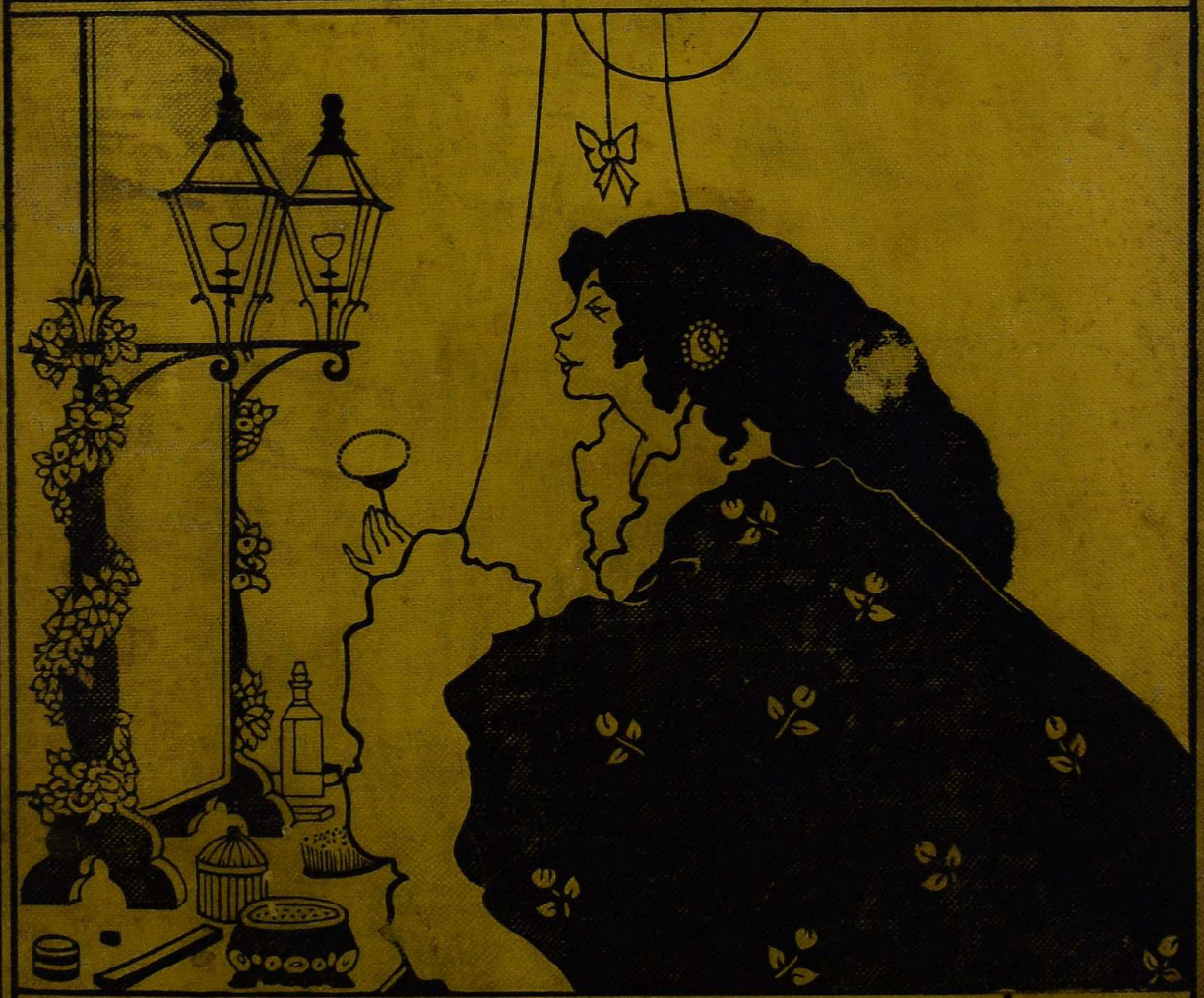
The Yellow Book

An Illustrated Quarterly

Volume III October 1894



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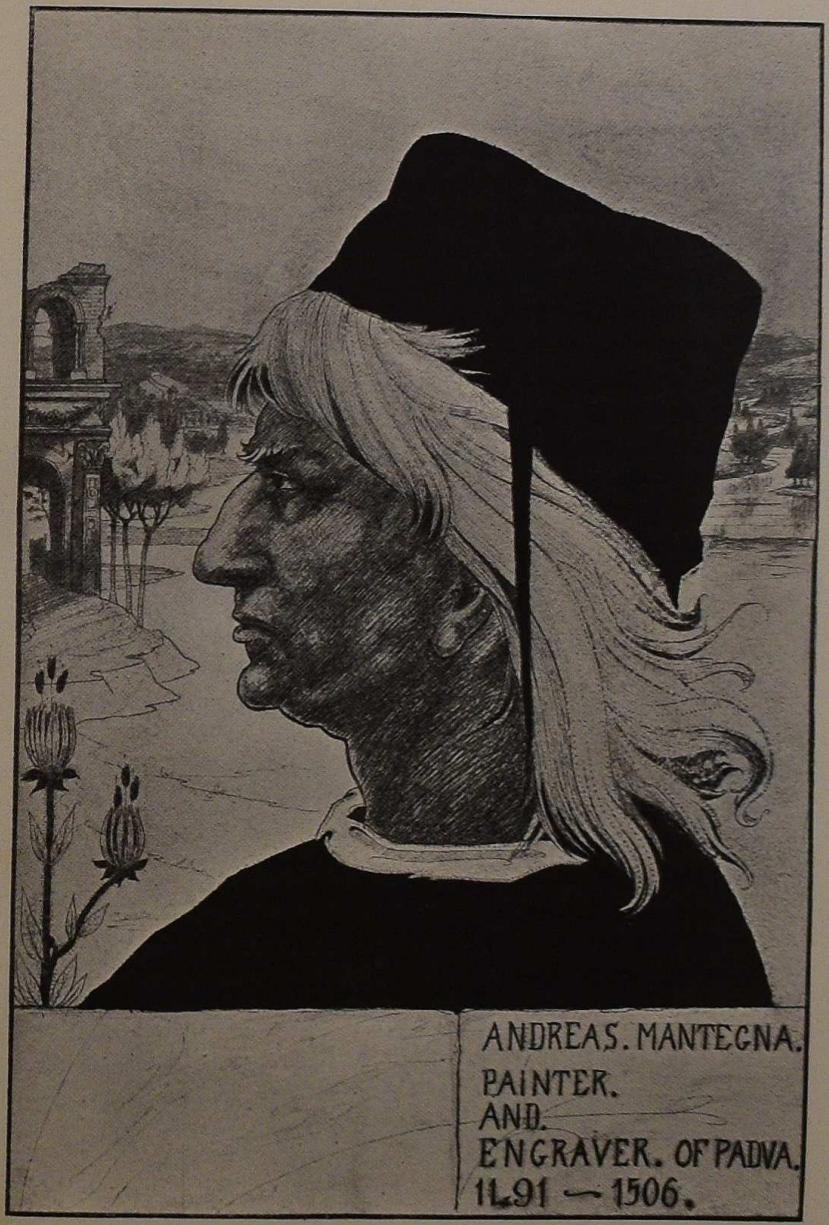
Mantegna

By Philip Broughton



ANDREAS. MANTEGNA.
PAINTER.
AND.
ENGRAVER. OF PADVA.
1431 — 1506.

Women—Wives or Mothers

By a Woman

We believe it to be well within the truth to say that most men cherish, hidden away in an inner pocket of consciousness, their own particular ideal of the perfect woman. Sole sovereign she of that unseen kingdom, and crowned and sceptred she remains long after her faithful subject has put aside the other playthings of his youth. The fetish is from time to time regarded rapturously, though sorrowfully, by its possessor, but it is never brought forth for public exhibition. If to worship and adore were the beginning and end of the pastime, no cavilling word need be said, for the power to worship is a great and good gift, and, save in the fabulous region of politics, is nowadays so rare an one, that when discovered in the actual world its steady encouragement becomes a duty. But to this apparently innocent diversion there is another side. Somewhat grave consequences are apt to follow, and it is to this point of view that we wish to call attention.

When the woman uncreate becomes the measuring rod by which her unconscious living rivals are judged, and are mostly found wanting, then we are minded to lift up our voice and put in a plea for fair-play. To the shrined deity are given by the acolothyst, not only all the perfections of person demanded by a severely

æsthetic

æsthetic sense, but all the moral qualities as well. Every grace of every fair woman he has ever met—the best attributes of his mother, his sister, and his aunt—are freely hers. None of the slight blemishes which occasionally tarnish the high lustre of virtue, none of the caprices to which sirens are constitutionally liable, are permitted. Faultless wife and faultless mother must she be, faithful lover and long-suffering friend, or he will have none of her in his temple. Now, this is surely a wholly unreasonable, an utterly extravagant demand on the part of man, and if analysed carefully, will, we believe, be found to yield egoism and gluttony in about equal parts. How, we venture to inquire, would he meet a like claim, were it in turn presented to him? A witty and light-hearted lady—a remnant yet remains, in spite of the advent of the leaping, bounding, new womanhood—once startled a selected audience by the general statement, "All men are widowers." But even if this generous utterance can be accepted as absolutely accurate, it can hardly be taken as a proof of man's fitness for both the important rôles involved.

For our own part, we are convinced that, broadly speaking, the exception only proving the rule—whatever that supporting phrase may mean—woman, fresh from Nature's moulding, is, so far as first intention is concerned, a predestined wife *or* mother. She is not both, though doubtless by constant endeavour, art and duty taking it turn and turn about, the dual end may, with hardness, be attained unto. For Nature is not economic. Far from her is the fatal utilitarian spirit which too often prompts the improver man (or—dare we confess it?—still more frequently woman) to attempt to make one object do the work of two. From all such sorry makeshifts Nature, the great modeller in clay, turns contemptuously away. Not long ago we read in a lady's journal of a 'combination gown' which by some cunning arrangement, the secret

secret whereof was only known to its lucky possessor, would do alternate day and night duty with equal credit and despatch. We have no desire to disparage the varied merits of this ingenious contrivance, but at the best it must remain an unlovely hybrid thing. Probably it knew this well, for gowns, too, have their feelings, and before now have been seen to go limp in a twinkling, overcome by a sudden access of despondency. Such a moment must certainly have come to the omnibus garment referred to above, when it found itself breakfasting with a severe and one-idea'd "tailor-made," or, more cruel experience still, dining skirt by skirt with a "mysterious miracle"—the latest label—in gossamer and satin.

We dare to go even further, and to declare that every woman knows in her heart—though never, never will she admit it to you—within which fold she was intended to pass. Is it an exaggeration to say that many a girl marries out of the superabundance of the maternal instinct, though she may the while be absolutely ignorant of the motive power at work? Believing herself to be wildly enamoured of the man of her (or her parents') choice, she is in reality only in love with the nursery of an after-day. Of worship between husband and wife, as a factor in the transaction, she knows nothing, or likely enough she imagines it present when it is the sweet passion of pity, or the more subtle patronage of bestowal, one or both, which are urging her forward into marriage. Gratitude, none the less real because unrealised, towards the man who thus enables her to fulfil her true destiny—the saving of souls alive—has also its share in the complex energy. Well for the husband of this wife if he allows himself gradually to occupy the position of eldest and most important of her children, to whom indeed a somewhat larger liberty is accorded, but from whom also more is required. In return for this submission boundless will be the care and devotion bestowed upon his upbringing day by day.

He

He will be foolish if he utters aloud, or even says in the silence of his heart, that motherhood is good, but that wifehood was what he wanted. It would be but a bootless kicking against the pricks. For he has chosen the mother-woman, and it is beyond his power, or that of any other specialist, to effect the fundamental change for which his soul may long. It only remains for him to make the best of a very good bargain, and one to which it is very probable his strict personal merits may hardly have entitled him.

If such a marriage is childless, it may still be a very useful one. Nature's accommodations often verge on the miraculous. The unemployed maternal instincts of the wife easily work themselves out in an unlimited and universal auntdom. It must be confessed that bad blunders are apt to ensue, but where the intentions are good, the pavement should not be too closely scanned. In fiction these are the Dinahs, the Romolas, the Dorotheas, the Mary Garths. Dear to the soul of the female writer is the maternal type. With loving, if tiresome frequency, she is presented to us again and yet again. In truth we sometimes grow a little weary of her saintly monotony. But as it is given to few of us to have the courage of our tastes, we bear with her, as we bear with other not altogether pleasing appliances, presented to us by earnest friends, with the assurance that they are for our good, or for our education, or some other equally superfluous purpose.

With the male artist this female model is not nearly so popular. It may be that he feels himself wholly unequal to cope with her countless perfections. Certain it is that he makes but a sad muddle of it when he tries. Witness Thackeray's faded, bloodless Lady Esmond, as set against his glowing wayward Trix—she, by the way, a beautifully-marked specimen of the wife-woman—though whether it would be pure wisdom to take her to wife must be left an open question. Still, we have in our time loved her

her well, and some of us have found it hard to forgive the black treachery done in bringing her back in her old age, a painted and scolding harridan. For these, well-loved of the gods, should, in fiction at least, die young.

Truth compels us to own regretfully that man in his self-indulgence shrinks from both the giving and receiving of dull moments, whilst woman, believing devoutly in their saving grace, is altruistic enough to devote herself with enthusiasm to the task of their administration. Now, dull moments are apt to lie hidden about the creases of the severely classic robe, which, in the story-books at any rate, these heroines always wear. We must all agree that during the last twenty years this type, with its portentous accumulation of self-conscious responsibility has increased alarmingly. To what is the increase to be attributed? The too rapid growth of the female population stands out plainly as prime cause. Legislators are athirst for things practical. Is it beyond their power to devise some method of dealing with this problem? The Chinese plan is painfully obvious, but only as a last and despairful resource, when the wise men of Westminster sitting on committees and commissions have failed, can it be mentioned for adoption in Europe. We are, alas! Science-ridden, and are likely to remain thus bridled and saddled for weary years to come. Every bush and every bug grows its own specialist, and yet we, the patient, the long-suffering public, are left to endure both the fogs that make of London one murky pit, and the redundant female birth-rate which threatens more revolutions than all the forces of the Anarchists in active combination. Meanwhile these devotees of the abstract play about with all sorts of trifles, masquerading as grave thinkers, hoping thus to escape their certain judgment-day. The identification of criminals by the variation of thumb-prints is a pretty conceit; so too is the record of the influence of the moon

moon on the tides, which, we are informed, employs all to itself a whole and highly paid professor with a yearly average of three pupils at Cambridge. But what are these save mere fads, on a par with leapfrog and skittles, in the presence of the momentous problems about and around us? Let these gentlemen jockeys look to it. The hour is not far distant when public opinion shall discover their uselessness and send them about their business.

In humbler ways, too, much might be done to stem the morbid activity of the collective female conscience. Big sins lie at the doors of the hosts of good men and women who turn out year by year tons of "books for the young" to serve as nutriment for the hungry nestlings of culpable, thoughtless parents. It is hard to overstate the pernicious effect of this class of *motif* literature. *Féerie* in old or new dress is the only nourishing food for the happy child who is to remain happy. The little girl, aged seven, who lately wrote in her diary before going to bed, "Of what *real* use am I in the world?" had, it is certain, been denied her Andersen, her Grimm, her Carroll, even her Blue fairy book. Turned in to browse on "Ministering Children," "Agatha's First Prayer," and the fatal "Eric"—into how many editions has this last well-meaning but poisonous romance not passed—the little victim of parental stupidity is thus left with an organ damaged for life by over-much stimulation at the start. This new massacre of the innocents is of purely nineteenth-century growth. It dates from the era of the awakened conscience, and is coincident with the formation of all the societies for the regeneration of the human race.

Per contra, the wife-woman, though but seldom to be met with in the multitudinous pages written by women, is the well-beloved, the chosen of the male artist. Week-days and Sundays he paints her portrait. Shakespeare returns to her again and again,

as

as though it were hard to part from her. Wicked Trix stands out as bold leader of one bad band. Tess belongs to the family, though she is of another branch ; so does Cathy of Wuthering Heights, and Lyndall of the African Farm ; whilst latest and slightest scamp of the lot comes dancing Dodo of Lambeth. Save in a strictly specialised sense, none of this class can be said to contrive the greatest good of the greatest number. These are the women to whom the nursery is at best but an interlude, and at worst a real interruption of their life's strongest interests. They are not skilled in dealing with early teething troubles, nor in the rival merits of Welsh and Saxony flannel stuffs. Their crass ignorance of all this deep lore may, it is true, go far to kill off superfluous offspring, but, unjust as it would appear, these are the mothers who each succeeding year become more and more adored of their sons. Fribblers though they be, they sweeten the world's corners with the perfume of their charm. And the bit of world's work in which they excel is the keeping alive the tradition of woman's witchery. Who, then, can deny them their plain uses ? When Fate is kind and bestows the fitting partner, the fires of their love never die down. They remain lovers to the end. Their husbands need fear no rival, not even in the person of their own superior son. When Fate is unkind and things go crookedly, these are the women whose wreckage strews life's high road, and from whom their wiser sisters turn reprovingly away. For the good woman who has to "work for her living," and who pretends to enjoy the healthful after-pains in her moral system, is rarely tolerant of the existence of the *leichtsinnige* sister for whom, as to Elijah at the brook, dainty morsels without labour are cheerfully provided by that inconsequent raven, man. This lady goes gaily, wearing what she has not spun, reaping where she has not sown. Sad reflections these for the high-souled woman whose enlightened demand

demand for justice turns in its present day impotency to wrath and bitterness.

Wisdom and foresight are never the attributes of the wife-woman. Charm, beguilement, fascination of sorts, form her poor equipment for life's selective struggle. These gifts cannot be said to promise, save when the stars are in happiest conjunction, long life and useful days for her intimates. Variations of the two types of Primitive Woman may abound, but the broad distinction between them is clearly cut and readily to be made out by the dullest groper after truth. We can imagine a modern Daniel addressing (quite uselessly) a modern disciple thus :

"Look to it now, O young man ! that your feet go straight, and slip not in search for the pearl that may be hid away for you. For she who loveth you best may work you all evil, and she who loveth her own soul's travail best will hardly fail you in the days and the years. But Love remaineth, and the way of return is not."

"Tell me not Now"

By William Watson

TELL me not now, if love for love
Thou canst return,—
Now while around us and above
Day's flambeaux burn.
Not in clear noon, with speech as clear,
Thy heart avow,
For every gossip wind to hear;
Tell me not now!

Tell me not now the tidings sweet,
The news divine;
A little longer at thy feet
Leave me to pine.
I would not have the gadding bird
Hear from his bough;
Nay, though I famish for a word,
Tell me not now!

But

But when deep trances of delight
All Nature seal;
When round the world the arms of Night
Caressing steal;
When rose to dreaming rose says, "*Dear*,
Dearest;" and when
Heaven sighs her secret in Earth's ear,—
Ah, tell me then!

From a Lithograph

By George Thomson

The Headswoman

By Kenneth Grahame

I

It was a bland sunny morning of a mediæval May—an old-style May of the most typical quality ; and the Council of the little town of St. Radegonde were assembled, as was their wont at that hour, in the picturesque upper chamber of the Hotel de Ville, for the dispatch of the usual municipal business. Though the date was early sixteenth century, the members of this particular town-council possessed some resemblance to those of similar assemblies in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and even the nineteenth centuries, in a general absence of any characteristic at all—unless a pervading hopeless insignificance can be considered as such. All the character, indeed, in the room seemed to be concentrated in the girl who stood before the table, erect, yet at her ease, facing the members in general and Mr. Mayor in particular ; a delicate-handed, handsome girl of some eighteen summers, whose tall, supple figure was well set off by the quiet, though tasteful mourning in which she was clad.

"Well, gentlemen," the Mayor was saying ; "this little business appears to be—er—quite in order, and it only remains for me to—er—review the facts. You are aware that the town has lately had the misfortune to lose its executioner—a gentleman who, I may say,

say, performed the duties of his office with neatness and dispatch, and gave the fullest satisfaction to all with whom he—er—came in contact. But the Council has already, in a vote of condolence, expressed its sense of the—er—striking qualities of the deceased. You are doubtless also aware that the office is hereditary, being secured to a particular family in this town, so long as any one of its members is ready and willing to take it up. The deed lies before me, and appears to be—er—quite in order. It is true that on this occasion the Council might have been called upon to consider and examine the title of the claimant, the late lamented official having only left a daughter—she who now stands before you ; but I am happy to say that Jeanne—the young lady in question—with what I am bound to call great good-feeling on her part, has saved us all trouble in that respect, by formally applying for the family post, with all its—er—duties, privileges, and emoluments ; and her application appears to be—er—quite in order. There is therefore, under the circumstances, nothing left for us to do but to declare the said applicant duly elected. I would wish, however, before I—er—sit down, to make it quite clear to the—er—fair petitioner, that if a laudable desire to save the Council trouble in the matter has led her to a—er—hasty conclusion, it is quite open to her to reconsider her position. Should she determine not to press her claim, the succession to the post would then apparently devolve upon her cousin Enguerrand, well known to you all as a practising advocate in the courts of this town. Though the youth has not, I admit, up to now proved a conspicuous success in the profession he has chosen, still there is no reason why a bad lawyer should not make an excellent executioner ; and in view of the close friendship—may I even say attachment ?—existing between the cousins, it is possible that this young lady may, in due course, practically enjoy the solid emoluments of the position without the necessity of

of discharging its (to some girls) uncongenial duties. And so, though not the rose herself, she would still be—er—near the rose!" And the Mayor resumed his seat, chuckling over his little pleasantry, which the keener wits of the Council proceeded to explain at length to the more obtuse.

"Permit me, Mr. Mayor," said the girl, quietly, "first to thank you for what was evidently the outcome of a kindly though misdirected feeling on your part; and then to set you right as to the grounds of my application for the post to which you admit my hereditary claim. As to my cousin, your conjecture as to the feeling between us is greatly exaggerated; and I may further say at once, from my knowledge of his character, that he is little qualified either to adorn or to dignify an important position such as this. A man who has achieved such indifferent success in a minor and less exacting walk of life, is hardly likely to shine in an occupation demanding punctuality, concentration, judgment—all the qualities, in fine, that go to make a good business man. But this is beside the question. My motives, gentlemen, in demanding what is my due, are simple and (I trust) honest, and I desire that you should know them. It is my wish to be dependent on no one. I am both willing and able to work, and I only ask for what is the common right of humanity—admission to the labour market. How many poor toiling women would simply jump at a chance like this which fortune lays open to me! And shall I, from any false deference to that conventional voice which proclaims this thing as "nice," and that thing as "not nice," reject a handicraft which promises me both artistic satisfaction and a competence? No, gentlemen; my claim is a small one—only a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. But I can accept nothing less, nor consent to forgo my rights, even or any contingent remainder of possible cousinly favour!"

There

There was a touch of scorn in her fine contralto voice as she finished speaking; the Mayor himself beamed approval. He was not wealthy, and had a large family of daughters; so Jeanne's sentiments seemed to him entirely right and laudable.

"Well, gentlemen," he began, briskly, "then all we've got to do, is to——"

"Beg pardon, your worship," put in Master Robinet, the tanner, who had been sitting with a petrified, Bill-the-Lizard sort of expression during the speechifying; "but are we to understand as how this here young lady is going to be the public executioner?"

"Really, neighbour Robinet," said the Mayor somewhat pettishly, "you've got ears like the rest of us, I suppose; and you know the contents of the deed; and you've had my assurance that it's—er—quite in order; and as it's getting towards lunch-time——"

"But it's unheard-of," protested honest Robinet. "There hasn't ever been no such thing—leastways not as I've heard tell."

"Well, well, well," said the Mayor, "everything must have a beginning, I suppose. Times are different now, you know. There's the march of intellect, and—er—all that sort of thing. We must advance with the times—don't you see, Robinet?—advance with the times!"

"Well I'm——" began the tanner.

But no one heard, on this occasion, the tanner's opinion as to his condition, physical or spiritual; for the clear contralto cut short his obtestations.

"If there's really nothing more to be said, Mr. Mayor," she remarked, "I need not trespass longer on your valuable time. I propose to take up the duties of my office to-morrow morning, at the

the usual hour. The salary will, I assume, be reckoned from the same date ; and I shall make the customary quarterly application for such additional emoluments as may have accrued to me during that period. You see I am familiar with the routine. Good morning, gentlemen ! " And as she passed from the Council chamber, her small head held erect, even the tanner felt that she took with her a large portion of the May sunshine which was condescending that morning to gild their deliberations.

II

One evening, a few weeks later, Jeanne was taking a stroll on the ramparts of the town, a favourite and customary walk of hers when business cares were over. The pleasant expanse of country that lay spread beneath her—the rich sunset, the gleaming sinuous river, and the noble old château that dominated both town and pasture from its adjacent height—all served to stir and bring out in her those poetic impulses which had lain dormant during the working day ; while the cool evening breeze smoothed out and obliterated any little jars or worries which might have ensued during the practice of a profession in which she was still something of a novice. This evening she felt fairly happy and content. True, business was rather brisk, and her days had been fully occupied ; but this mattered little so long as her modest efforts were appreciated, and she was now really beginning to feel that, with practice, her work was creditably and artistically done. In a satisfied, somewhat dreamy mood, she was drinking in the various sweet influences of the evening, when she perceived her cousin approaching.

" Good

"Good evening, Enguerrand," cried Jeanne pleasantly; she was thinking that since she had begun to work for her living, she had hardly seen him—and they used to be such good friends. Could anything have occurred to offend him?

Enguerrand drew near somewhat moodily, but could not help relaxing his expression at sight of her fair young face, set in its framework of rich brown hair, wherein the sunset seemed to have tangled itself and to cling, reluctant to leave it.

"Sit down, Enguerrand," continued Jeanne, "and tell me what you've been doing this long time. Been very busy, and winning forensic fame and gold?"

"Well, not exactly," said Enguerrand, moody once more. "The fact is, there's so much interest required nowadays at the courts, that unassisted talent never gets a chance. And you, Jeanne?"

"Oh, I don't complain," answered Jeanne, lightly. "Of course it's fair-time just now, you know, and we're always busy then. But work will be lighter soon, and then I'll get a day off, and we'll have a delightful ramble and picnic in the woods, as we used to do when we were children. What fun we had in those old days, Enguerrand! Do you remember when we were quite little tots, and used to play at executions in the back-garden, and you were a bandit and a buccaneer, and all sorts of dreadful things, and I used to chop off your head with a paper-knife? How pleased dear father used to be!"

"Jeanne," said Enguerrand, with some hesitation, "you've touched upon the very subject that I came to speak to you about. Do you know, dear, I can't help feeling—it may be unreasonable, but still the feeling is there—that the profession you have adopted is not quite—is just a little——"

"Now, Enguerrand!" said Jeanne, an angry flash sparkling in her

her eyes. She was a little touchy on this subject, the word she most affected to despise being also the one she most dreaded—the adjective "unladylike."

"Don't misunderstand me, Jeanne," went on Enguerrand, imploringly: "You may naturally think that, because I should have succeeded to the post, with its income and perquisites, had you relinquished your claim, there is therefore some personal feeling in my remonstrances. Believe me, it is not so. My own interests do not weigh with me for a moment. It is on your own account, Jeanne, and yours alone, that I ask you to consider whether the higher æsthetic qualities, which I know you possess, may not become cramped and thwarted by 'the trivial round, the common task,' which you have lightly undertaken. However laudable a professional life may be, one always feels that with a delicate organism such as woman, some of the bloom may possibly get rubbed off the peach."

"Well, Enguerrand," said Jeanne, composing herself with an effort, though her lips were set hard, "I will do you the justice to belive that personal advantage does not influence you, and I will try to reason calmly with you, and convince you that you are simply hide-bound by old-world prejudice. Now, take yourself, for instance, who come here to instruct me: what does *your* profession amount to, when all's said and done? A mass of lies, quibbles, dodges, and tricks, that would make any self-respecting executioner blush! And even with the dirty weapons at your command, you make but a poor show of it. There was that wretched fellow you defended only two days ago. (I was in court during the trial—professional interest, you know.) Well, he had his regular *alibi* all ready, as clear as clear could be; only you must needs go and mess and bungle the thing up, so that, as I expected all along, he was passed on to me for treatment in due course.

course. You may like to have his opinion—that of a shrewd, though unlettered person. 'It's a real pleasure, miss,' he said, 'to be handled by you. You *knows* your work, and you *does* your work—though p'raps I ses it as shouldn't. If that blooming fool of a mouthpiece of mine'—he was referring to you, dear, in your capacity of advocate—'had known his business half as well as you do yours, I shouldn't a bin here now!' And you know, Enguerrand, he was perfectly right."

"Well, perhaps he was," admitted Enguerrand. "You see, I had been working at a sonnet the night before, and I couldn't get the rhymes right, and they would keep coming into my head in court and mixing themselves up with the *alibi*. But look here, Jeanne, when you saw I was going off the track, you might have given me a friendly hint, you know—for old times' sake, if not for the prisoner's!"

"I daresay," replied Jeanne, calmly: "perhaps you'll tell me why I should sacrifice my interests because you're unable to look after yours. You forget that I receive a bonus, over and above my salary, upon each exercise of my functions!"

"True," said Enguerrand, gloomily: "I did forget that. I wish I had your business aptitudes, Jeanne."

"I daresay you do," remarked Jeanne. "But you see, dear, how all your arguments fall to the ground. You mistake a prepossession for a logical base. Now if I had gone, like that Clairette you used to dangle after, and been waiting-woman to some grand lady in a château—a thin-blooded compound of drudge and sycophant—then, I suppose, you'd have been perfectly satisfied. So feminine! So genteel!"

"She's not a bad sort of girl, little Claire," said Enguerrand, reflectively (thereby angering Jeanne afresh): "but putting her aside,—of course you could always beat me at argument, Jeanne; you'd

you'd have made a much better lawyer than I. But you know, dear, how much I care about you ; and I did hope that on that account even a prejudice, however unreasonable, might have some little weight. And I'm not alone, let me tell you, in my views. There was a fellow in court only to-day, who was saying that yours was only a *succès d'estime*, and that woman, as a naturally talkative and hopelessly unpunctual animal, could never be more than a clever amateur in the profession you have chosen."

"That will do, Enguerrand," said Jeanne, proudly ; "it seems that when argument fails, you can stoop so low as to insult me through my sex. You men are all alike—steeped in brutish masculine prejudice. Now go away, and don't mention the subject to me again till you're quite reasonable and nice."

III

Jeanne passed a somewhat restless night after her small scene with her cousin, waking depressed and unrefreshed. Though she had carried matters with so high a hand, and had scored so distinctly all around, she had been more agitated than she had cared to show. She liked Enguerrand ; and more especially did she like his admiration for her ; and that chance allusion to Clairette contained possibilities that were alarming. In embracing a professional career, she had never thought for a moment that it could militate against that due share of admiration to which, as a girl, she was justly entitled ; and Enguerrand's views seemed this morning all the more narrow and inexcusable. She rose languidly, and as soon as she was dressed sent off a little note to the Mayor, saying that she had a nervous headache and felt out of sorts, and begging

begging to be excused from attendance on that day; and the missive reached the Mayor just as he was taking his usual place at the head of the Board.

"Dear, dear," said the kind-hearted old man, as soon as he had read the letter to his fellow-councilmen: "I'm very sorry. Poor girl! Here, one of you fellows, just run round and tell the gaoler there won't be any business to-day. Jeanne's seedy. It's put off till to-morrow. And now, gentlemen, the agenda——"

"Really, your worship," exploded Robinet, "this is simply ridiculous!"

"Upon my word, Robinet," said the Mayor, "I don't know what's the matter with you. Here's a poor girl unwell—and a more hardworking girl isn't in the town—and instead of sympathising with her, and saying you're sorry, you call it ridiculous! Suppose you had a headache yourself! You wouldn't like——"

"But it *is* ridiculous," maintained the tanner stoutly. "Who ever heard of an executioner having a nervous headache? There's no precedent for it. And 'out of sorts,' too! Suppose the criminals said they were out of sorts, and didn't feel up to being executed?"

"Well, suppose they did," replied the Mayor, "we'd try and meet them halfway, I daresay. They'd have to be executed some time or other, you know. Why on earth are you so captious about trifles? The prisoners won't mind, and *I* don't mind: nobody's inconvenienced, and everybody's happy!"

"You're right there, Mr. Mayor," put in another councilman. "This executing business used to give the town a lot of trouble and bother; now it's all as easy as kiss-your-hand. Instead of objecting, as they used to do, and wanting to argue the point and kick up a row, the fellows as is told off for execution come skipping along in the morning, like a lot of lambs in Maytime. And

And then the fun there is on the scaffold! The jokes, the back-answers, the repartees! And never a word to shock a baby! Why, my little girl, as goes through the market-place every morning—on her way to school, you know—she says to me only yesterday, she says, 'Why, father,' she says, 'it's as good as the play-actors,' she says."

"There again," persisted Robinet, "I object to that too. They ought to show a properer feeling. Playing at mummers is one thing, and being executed is another, and people ought to keep 'em separate. In my father's time, that sort of thing wasn't thought good taste, and I don't hold with new-fangled notions."

"Well, really, neighbour," said the Mayor, "I think you're out of sorts yourself to-day. You must have got out of bed the wrong side this morning. As for a little joke, more or less, we all know a maiden loves a merry jest when she's certain of having the last word! But I'll tell you what I'll do, if it'll please you; I'll go round and see Jeanne myself on my way home, and tell her—quite nicely, you know—that once in a way doesn't matter, but that if she feels her health won't let her keep regular business hours, she mustn't think of going on with anything that's bad for her. Like that, don't you see? And now, gentlemen, let's read the minutes!"

Thus it came about that Jeanne took her usual walk that evening with a ruffled brow and a swelling heart; and her little hand opened and shut angrily as she paced the ramparts. She couldn't stand being found fault with. How could she help having a headache? Those clods of citizens didn't know what a highly-strung sensitive organisation was. Absorbed in her reflections, she had taken several turns up and down the grassy footway, before she became aware that she was not alone. A youth, of richer dress and more elegant bearing than the general run of the

the Radegundians, was leaning in an embrasure, watching the graceful figure with evident interest.

"Something has vexed you, fair maiden?" he observed, coming forward deferentially as soon as he perceived he was noticed; "and care sits but awkwardly on that smooth young brow."

"Nay, it is nothing, kind sir," replied Jeanne; "we girls who work for our living must not be too sensitive. My employers have been somewhat exigent, that is all. I did wrong to take it to heart."

"'Tis the way of the bloated capitalist," rejoined the young man lightly, as he turned to walk by her side. "They grind us, they grind us; perhaps some day they will come under your hands in turn, and then you can pay them out. And so you toil and spin, fair lily! And yet methinks those delicate hands show little trace of labour?"

"You wrong me, indeed, sir," replied Jeanne merrily. "These hands of mine, that you are so good as to admire, do great execution!"

"I can well believe that your victims are numerous," he replied; "may I be permitted to rank myself among the latest of them?"

"I wish you a better fortune, kind sir," answered Jeanne demurely.

"I can imagine no more delightful one," he replied; "and where do you ply your daily task, fair mistress? Not entirely out of sight and access, I trust?"

"Nay, sir," laughed Jeanne, "I work in the market-place most mornings, and there is no charge for admission; and access is far from difficult. Indeed, some complain—but that is no business of mine. And now I must be wishing you a good evening. Nay"—for he would have detained her—"it is not seemly for an unprotected

unprotected maiden to tarry in converse with a stranger at this hour. *Au revoir*, sir! If you should happen to be in the market-place any morning "—— And she tripped lightly away. The youth, gazing after her retreating figure, confessed himself strangely fascinated by this fair unknown, whose particular employment, by the way, he had forgotten to ask; while Jeanne, as she sped homewards, could not help reflecting that for style and distinction, this new acquaintance threw into the shade all the Enguerrands and others she had met hitherto—even in the course of business.

IV

The next morning was bright and breezy, and Jeanne was early at her post, feeling quite a different girl. The busy little market-place was full of colour and movement, and the gay patches of flowers and fruit, the strings of fluttering kerchiefs, and the piles of red and yellow pottery, formed an artistic setting to the quiet impressive scaffold which they framed. Jeanne was in short sleeves, according to the etiquette of her office, and her round graceful arms showed snowily against her dark blue skirt and scarlet tight-fitting bodice. Her assistant looked at her with admiration.

"Hope you're better, miss," he said respectfully. "It was just as well you didn't put yourself out to come yesterday; there was nothing particular to do. Only one fellow, and he said *he* didn't care; anything to oblige a lady!"

"Well, I wish he'd hurry up now, to oblige a lady," said Jeanne, swinging her axe carelessly to and fro: "ten minutes past the hour; I shall have to talk to the Mayor about this."

"It's a pity there ain't a better show this morning," pursued the assistant, as he leant over the rail of the scaffold and spat meditatively into the busy throng below. "They do say as how the young Seigneur arrived at the Château yesterday—him as has been finishing his education in Paris, you know. He's as likely as not to be in the market-place to-day ; and if he's disappointed, he may go off to Paris again, which would be a pity, seeing the Château's been empty so long. But he may go to Paris, or anywheres else he's a mind to, he won't see better workmanship than in this here little town ! "

"Well, my good Raoul," said Jeanne, colouring slightly at the obvious compliment, "quality, not quantity, is what we aim at here, you know. If a Paris education has been properly assimilated by the Seigneur, he will not fail to make all the necessary allowances. But see, the prison-doors are opening at last ! "

They both looked across the little square to the prison, which fronted the scaffold ; and sure enough, a small body of men, the Sheriff at their head, was issuing from the building, conveying, or endeavouring to convey, the tardy prisoner to the scaffold. That gentleman, however, seemed to be in a different and less obliging frame of mind from that of the previous day ; and at every pace one or other of the guards was shot violently into the middle of the square, propelled by a vigorous kick or blow from the struggling captive. The crowd, unaccustomed of late to such demonstrations of feeling, and resenting the prisoner's want of taste, hooted loudly ; but it was not until that ingenious mediæval arrangement known as *la marche aux crapauds* had been brought to bear on him, that the reluctant convict could be prevailed upon to present himself before the young lady he had already so unwarrantably detained.

Jeanne's profession had both accustomed her to surprises and

and taught her the futility of considering her clients as drawn from any one particular class: yet she could hardly help feeling some astonishment on recognising her new acquaintance of the previous evening. That, with all his evident amiability of character, he should come to this end, was not in itself a special subject for wonder; but that he should have been conversing with her on the ramparts at the hour when—after courteously excusing her attendance on the scaffold—he was cooling his heels in prison for another day, seemed hardly to be accounted for, at first sight. Jeanne, however, reflected that the reconciling of apparent contradictions was not included in her official duties.

The Sheriff, wiping his heated brow, now read the formal *procès* delivering over the prisoner to the executioner's hands; "and a nice job we've had to get him here," he added on his own account. And the young man, who had remained perfectly tractable since his arrival, stepped forward and bowed politely.

"Now that we have been properly introduced," said he courteously, "allow me to apologise for any inconvenience you have been put to by my delay. The fault was entirely mine, and these gentlemen are in no way to blame. Had I known whom I was to have the pleasure of meeting, wings could not have conveyed me swiftly enough."

"Do not mention, I pray, the word inconvenience," replied Jeanne with that timid grace which so well became her: "I only trust that any slight discomfort it may be my duty to cause you before we part, will be as easily pardoned. And now—for the morning, alas! advances—any little advice or assistance that I can offer is quite at your service; for the situation is possibly new, and you may have had but little experience."

"Faith, none worth mentioning," said the prisoner, gaily. "Treat

"Treat me as a raw beginner. Though our acquaintance has been but brief, I have the utmost confidence in you."

"Then, sir," said Jeanne, blushing, "suppose I were to assist you in removing this gay doublet, so as to give both of us more freedom and less responsibility?"

"A perquisite of the office?" queried the prisoner with a smile, as he slipped one arm out of the sleeve.

A flush came over Jeanne's fair brow. "That was ungenerous," she said.

"Nay, pardon me, sweet one," said he, laughing: "'twas but a poor jest of mine—in bad taste, I willingly admit."

"I was sure you did not mean to hurt me," she replied kindly, while her fingers were busy in turning back the collar of his shirt. It was composed, she noticed, of the finest point lace; and she could not help a feeling of regret that some slight error—as must, from what she knew, exist somewhere—should compel her to take a course so at variance with her real feelings. Her only comfort was that the youth himself seemed entirely satisfied with his situation. He hummed the last air from Paris during her ministrations, and when she had quite finished, kissed the pretty fingers with a metropolitan grace.

"And now, sir," said Jeanne, "if you will kindly come this way: and please to mind the step—so. Now, if you will have the goodness to kneel here—nay, the sawdust is perfectly clean; you are my first client this morning. On the other side of the block you will find a nick, more or less adapted to the human chin, though a perfect fit cannot of course be guaranteed in every case. So! Are you pretty comfortable?"

"A bed of roses," replied the prisoner. "And what a really admirable view one gets of the valley and the river, from just this particular point!"

"Charming

"Charming, is it not?" replied Jeanne. "I'm so glad you do justice to it. Some of your predecessors have really quite vexed me by their inability to appreciate that view. It's worth coming here to see it. And now, to return to business for one moment,—would you prefer to give the word yourself? Some people do; it's a mere matter of taste. Or will you leave yourself entirely in my hands?"

"Oh, in your fair hands," replied her client, "which I beg you to consider respectfully kissed once more by your faithful servant to command."

Jeanne, blushing rosily, stepped back a pace, moistening her palms as she grasped her axe, when a puffing and blowing behind caused her to turn her head, and she perceived the Mayor hastily ascending the scaffold.

"Hold on a minute, Jeanne, my girl," he gasped. "Don't be in a hurry. There's been some little mistake."

Jeanne drew herself up with dignity. "I'm afraid I don't quite understand you, Mr. Mayor," she replied in freezing accents. "There's been no little mistake on my part that I'm aware of."

"No, no, no," said the Mayor, apologetically; "but on somebody else's there has. You see it happened in this way: this here young fellow was going round the town last night; and he'd been dining, I should say, and he was carrying on rather free. I will only say so much in your presence, that he was carrying on decidedly free. So the town-guard happened to come across him, and he was very high and very haughty, he was, and wouldn't give his name nor yet his address—as a gentleman should, you know, when he's been dining and carrying on free. So our fellows just ran him in—and it took the pick of them all their time to do it, too. Well, then, the other chap who was in prison—

the

the gentleman who obliged you yesterday, you know—what does he do but slip out and run away in the middle of all the row and confusion ; and very inconsiderate and ungentlemanly it was of him to take advantage of us in that mean way, just when we wanted a little sympathy and forbearance. Well, the Sheriff comes this morning to fetch out his man for execution, and he knows there's only one man to execute, and he sees there's only one man in prison, and it all seems as simple as A B C—he never was much of a mathematician, you know—so he fetches our friend here along, quite gaily. And—and that's how it came about, you see ; *hinc illæ lachrymæ*, as the Roman poet has it. So now I shall just give this young fellow a good talking to, and discharge him with a caution ; and we shan't require you any more to-day, Jeanne, my girl."

"Now, look here, Mr. Mayor," said Jeanne severely, "you utterly fail to grasp the situation in its true light. All these little details may be interesting in themselves, and doubtless the press will take note of them ; but they are entirely beside the point. With the muddleheadedness of your officials (which I have frequently remarked upon) I have nothing whatever to do. All I know is, that this young gentleman has been formally handed over to me for execution, with all the necessary legal requirements ; and executed he has got to be. When my duty has been performed, you are at liberty to re-open the case if you like ; and any 'little mistake' that may have occurred through your stupidity you can then rectify at your leisure. Meantime, you've no *locus standi* here at all ; in fact, you've no business whatever lumbering up my scaffold. So shut up and clear out."

"Now, Jeanne, do be reasonable," implored the Mayor. "You women are so precise. You never will make any allowance for the necessary margin of error in things."

"If

"If I were to allow the necessary margin for all *your* errors, Mayor," replied Jeanne, coolly, "the edition would have to be a large-paper one, and even then the text would stand a poor chance. And now, if you don't allow me the necessary margin to swing my axe, there may be another 'little mistake'——"

But at this point a hubbub arose at the foot of the scaffold, and Jeanne, leaning over, perceived sundry tall fellows, clad in the livery of the Seigneur, engaged in dispersing the municipal guard by the agency of well-directed kicks, applied with heartiness and anatomical knowledge. A moment later, there strode on to the scaffold, clad in black velvet, and adorned with his gold chain of office, the stately old seneschal of the Château, evidently in a towering passion.

"Now, mark my words, you miserable little bladder-o'-lard," he roared at the Mayor (whose bald head certainly shone provokingly in the morning sun), "see if I don't take this out of your skin presently!" And he passed on to where the youth was still kneeling, apparently quite absorbed in the view.

"My lord," he said, firmly though respectfully, "your hair-brained folly really passes all bounds. Have you entirely lost your head?"

"Faith, nearly," said the young man, rising and stretching himself. "Is that you, old Thibault? Ow, what a crick I've got in my neck! But that view of the valley was really delightful!"

"Did you come here simply to admire the view, my lord?" inquired Thibault severely.

"I came because my horse would come," replied the young Seigneur lightly: "that is, these gentlemen here were so pressing; they would not hear of any refusal; and besides, they forgot to mention what my attendance was required in such a hurry for. And

And when I got here, Thibault, old fellow, and saw that divine creature—nay, a goddess, *dea certé*—so graceful, so modest, so anxious to acquit herself with credit—— Well, you know my weakness; I never could bear to disappoint a woman. She had evidently set her heart on taking my head; and as she had my heart already——"

"I think, my lord," said Thibault with some severity, "you had better let me escort you back to the Château. This appears to be hardly a safe place for light-headed and susceptible persons!"

Jeanne, as was natural, had the last word. "Understand me, Mr. Mayor," said she, "these proceedings are entirely irregular. I decline to recognise them, and when the quarter expires I shall claim the usual bonus!"

V

When, an hour or two later, an invitation arrived—courteously worded, but significantly backed by an escort of half-a-dozen tall archers—for both Jeanne and the Mayor to attend at the Château without delay, Jeanne for her part received it with neither surprise nor reluctance. She had felt it especially hard that the only two interviews fate had granted her with the one man who had made some impression on her heart, should be hampered, the one by considerations of propriety, the other by the conflicting claims of her profession and its duties. On this occasion, now, she would have an excellent chaperon in the Mayor; and business being over for the day, they could meet and unbend on a common social footing. The Mayor was not at all surprised either, considering what had gone before; but he was exceedingly terrified, and sought some consolation from Jeanne as they proceeded together to

to the Château. That young lady's remarks, however, could hardly be called exactly comforting.

"I always thought you'd put your foot in it some day, Mayor," she said. "You are so hopelessly wanting in system and method. Really, under the present happy-go-lucky police arrangements, I never know whom I may not be called upon to execute. Between you and my cousin Enguerrand, life is hardly safe in this town. And the worst of it is, that we other officials on the staff have to share in the discredit."

"What do you think they'll do to me, Jeanne?" whimpered the Mayor, perspiring freely.

"Can't say, I'm sure," pursued the candid Jeanne. "Of course, if it's anything in the *rack* line of business, I shall have to superintend the arrangements, and then you can feel sure you're in capable hands. But probably they'll only fine you pretty smartly, give you a month or two in the dungeons, and dismiss you from your post; and you will hardly grudge any slight personal inconvenience resulting from an arrangement so much to the advantage of the town."

This was hardly reassuring, but the Mayor's official reprimand of the previous day still rankled in this unforgiving young person's mind.

On their reaching the Château, the Mayor was conducted aside, to be dealt with by Thibault; and from the sounds of agonised protestation and lament which shortly reached Jeanne's ears, it was evident that he was having a *mauvais quart d'heure*. The young lady was shown respectfully into a chamber apart, where she had hardly had time to admire sufficiently the good taste of the furniture and the magnificence of the tapestry with which the walls were hung, when the Seigneur entered and welcomed her with a cordial grace that put her entirely at her ease.

"Your

"Your punctuality puts me to shame, fair mistress," he said, "considering how unwarrantably I kept you waiting this morning, and how I tested your patience by my ignorance and awkwardness."

He had changed his dress, and the lace round his neck was even richer than before. Jeanne had always considered one of the chief marks of a well-bred man to be a fine disregard for the amount of his washing-bill; and then with what good taste he referred to recent events—putting himself in the wrong, as a gentleman should!

"Indeed, my lord," she replied modestly, "I was only too anxious to hear from your own lips that you bore me no ill-will for the part forced on me by circumstances in our recent interview. Your lordship has sufficient critical good sense, I feel sure, to distinguish between the woman and the official."

"True, Jeanne," he replied, drawing nearer; "and while I shrink from expressing, in their fulness, all the feelings that the woman inspires in me, I have no hesitation—for I know it will give you pleasure—in acquainting you with the entire artistic satisfaction with which I watched you at your task!"

"But, indeed" said Jeanne, "you did not see me at my best. In fact, I can't help wishing—it's ridiculous, I know, because the thing is hardly practicable—but if I could only have carried my performance quite through, and put the last finishing touches to it, you would not have been judging me now by the mere 'blocking-in' of what promised to be a masterpiece!"

"Yes, I wish it could have been arranged somehow," said the Seigneur reflectively; "but perhaps it's better as it is. I am content to let the artist remain for the present on trust, if I may only take over, fully paid up, the woman I adore!"

Jeanne felt strangely weak. The official seemed oozing out at her

her fingers and toes, while the woman's heart beat even more distressingly.

"I have one little question to ask," he murmured (his arm was about her now). "Do I understand that you still claim your bonus?"

Jeanne felt like water in his strong embrace; but she nerved herself to answer faintly but firmly: "Yes!"

"Then so do I," he replied, as his lips met hers.

* * * * *

Executions continued to occur in St. Radegonde; the Radegundians being conservative and very human. But much of the innocent enjoyment that formerly attended them departed after the fair Chatelaine had ceased to officiate. Enguerrand, on succeeding to the post, wedded Clairette, she being (he was heard to say) a more suitable match in mind and temper than others of whom he would name no names. Rumour had it, that he found his match and something over; while as for temper—and mind (which she gave him in bits)—— But the domestic trials of high-placed officials have a right to be held sacred. The profession, in spite of his best endeavours, languished nevertheless. Some said that the scaffold lacked its old attraction for criminals of spirit; others, more unkindly, that the headsman was the innocent cause, and that Enguerrand was less fatal in his new sphere than formerly, when practising in the criminal court as advocate for the defence.

Credo

By Arthur Symons

EACH, in himself, his hour to be and cease
Endures alone, yet few there be who dare
Sole with himself his single burden bear,
All the long day until the night's release.

Yet, ere the night fall, and the shadows close,
This labour of himself is each man's lot ;
All a man hath, yet living, is forgot,
Himself he leaves behind him when he goes.

If he have any valiancy within,
If he have made his life his very own,
If he have loved and laboured, and have known
A strenuous virtue, and the joy of sin ;

Then, being dead, he has not lived in vain,
For he has saved what most desire to lose,
And he has chosen what the few must choose,
Since life, once lived, returns no more again.

For

For of our time we lose so large a part
In serious trifles, and so oft let slip
The wine of every moment at the lip
Its moment, and the moment of the heart.

We are awake so little on the earth,
And we shall sleep so long, and rise so late,
If there is any knocking at that gate
Which is the gate of death, the gate of birth.

Four Drawings

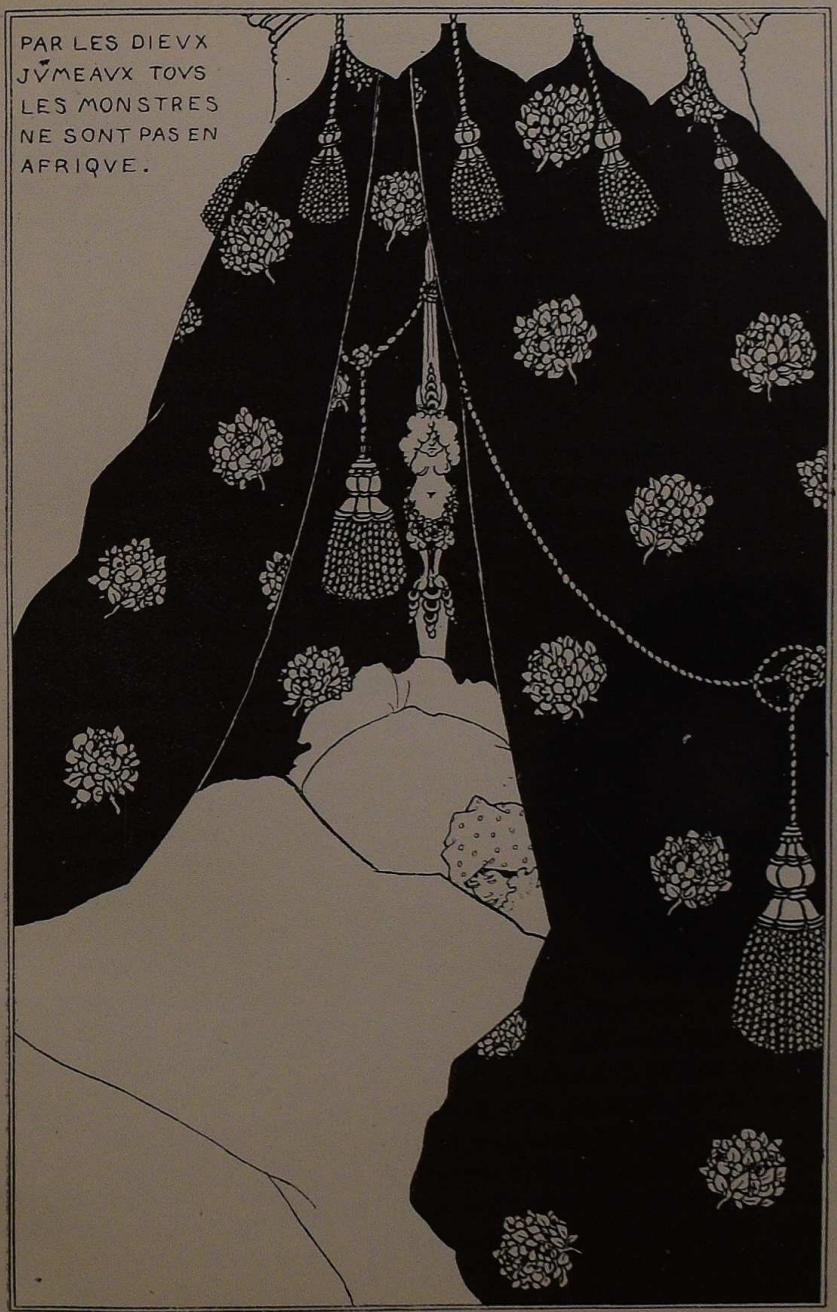
By Aubrey Beardsley

I. Portrait of Himself

II. Lady Gold's Escort

III. The Wagnerites

IV. La Dame aux Camélias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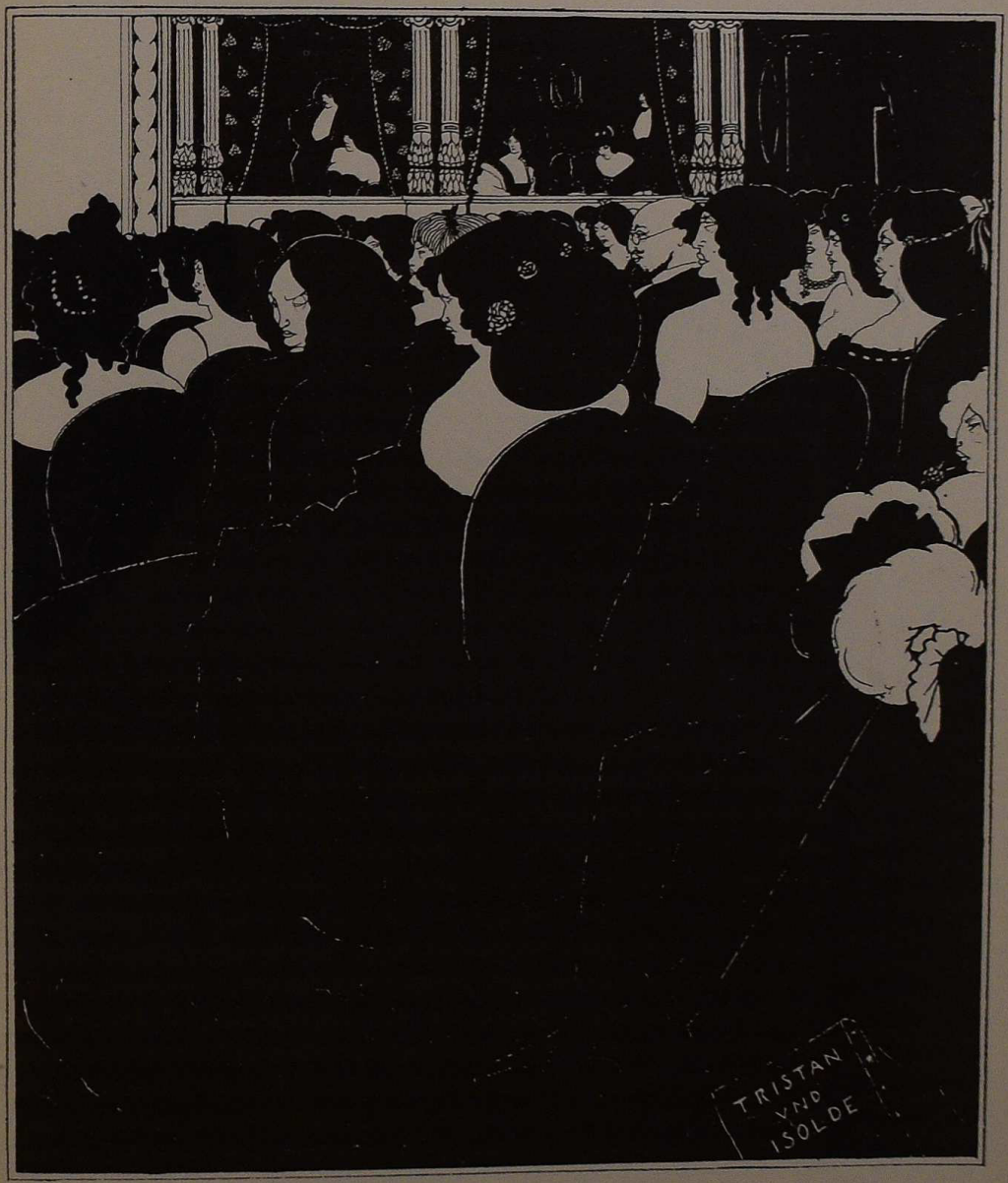

TRISTAN
VND
ISOLDE

White Magic

By Ella D'Arcy

I SPENT one evening last summer with my friend Mauger, *pharmacien* in the little town of Jacques-le-Port. He pronounces his name Major, by-the-bye, it being a quaint custom of the Islands to write proper names one way and speak them another, thus serving to bolster up that old, old story of the German savant's account of the difficulties of the English language—"where you spell a man's name Verulam," says he reproachfully, "and pronounce it Bacon."

Mauger and I sat in the pleasant wood-panelled parlour behind the shop, from whence all sorts of aromatic odours found their way in through the closed door to mingle with the fragrance of figs, Ceylon tea, and hot *gôches-à-beurre*, constituting the excellent meal spread before us. The large old-fashioned windows were wide open, and I looked straight out upon the harbour, filled with holiday yachts, and the wonderful azure sea.

Over against the other islands, opposite, a gleam of white streaked the water, white clouds hung motionless in the blue sky, and a tiny boat with white sails passed out round Falla Point. A white butterfly entered the room to flicker in gay uncertain curves above the cloth, and a warm reflected light played over the slender rat-tailed forks and spoons, and raised by a tone or two the colour of

of Mauger's tanned face and yellow beard. For, in spite of a sedentary profession, his preferences lie with an out-of-door life, and he takes an afternoon off whenever practicable, as he had done that day, to follow his favourite pursuit over the golf-links at Les Landes.

While he had been deep in the mysteries of teeing and putting, with no subtler problem to be solved than the judicious selection of mashie and cleek, I had explored some of the curious cromlechs or *pouquelayes* scattered over this part of the island, and my thoughts and speech harked back irresistibly to the strange old religions and usages of the past.

"Science is all very well in its way," said I; "and of course it's an inestimable advantage to inhabit this so-called nineteenth century; but the mediæval want of science was far more picturesque. The once universal belief in charms and portents, in wandering saints, and fighting fairies, must have lent an interest to life which these prosaic days sadly lack. Madelon then would steal from her bed on moonlight nights in May, and slip across the dewy grass with naked feet, to seek the reflection of her future husband's face in the first running stream she passed; now, Miss Mary Jones puts on her bonnet and steps round the corner, on no more romantic errand than the investment of her month's wages in the savings bank at two and a half per cent."

Mauger laughed. "I wish she did anything half so prudent! That has not been my experience of the Mary Joneses."

"Well, anyhow," I insisted, "the Board school has rationalised them. It has pulled up the innate poetry of their nature to replace it by decimal fractions."

To which Mauger answered "Rot!" and offered me his cigarette-case. After the first few silent whiffs, he went on as follows: "The innate poetry of Woman! Confess now, there is

no

no more unpoetic creature under the sun. Offer her the sublimest poetry ever written and the *Daily Telegraph's* latest article on fashions, or a good sound murder or reliable divorce, and there's no betting on her choice, for it's a dead certainty. Many men have a love of poetry, but I'm inclined to think that a hundred women out of ninety-nine positively dislike it."

Which struck me as true. "We'll drop the poetry, then," I answered; "but my point remains, that if the girl of to-day has no superstitions, the girl of to-morrow will have no beliefs. Teach her to sit down thirteen to table, to spill the salt, and walk under a ladder with equanimity, and you open the door for Spencer and Huxley, and—and all the rest of it," said I, coming to an impotent conclusion.

"Oh, if superstition were the salvation of woman—but you are thinking of young ladies in London, I suppose? Here, in the Islands, I can show you as much superstition as you please. I'm not sure that the country-people in their heart of hearts don't still worship the old gods of the *pouquelayes*. You would not, of course, find any one to own up to it, or to betray the least glimmer of an idea as to your meaning, were you to question him, for ours is a shrewd folk, wearing their orthodoxy bravely; but possibly the old beliefs are cherished with the more ardour for not being openly avowed. Now you like bits of actuality. I'll give you one, and a proof, too, that the modern maiden is still separated by many a fathom of salt sea-water from these fortunate isles.

"Some time ago, on a market morning, a girl came into the shop, and asked for some blood from a dragon. 'Some what?' said I, not catching her words. 'Well, just a little blood from a dragon,' she answered very tremulously, and blushing. She meant of course, 'dragon's blood,' a resinous powder, formerly much used in medicine, though out of fashion now.

"She was a pretty young creature, with pink cheeks and dark eyes, and a forlorn expression of countenance which didn't seem at all to fit in with her blooming health. Not from the town, or I should have known her face; evidently come from one of the country parishes to sell her butter and eggs. I was interested to discover what she wanted the 'dragon's blood' for, and after a certain amount of hesitation she told me. 'They do say it's good, sir, if anything should have happened betwixt you an' your young man.' 'Then you have a young man?' said I. 'Yes, sir.' 'And you've fallen out with him?' 'Yes, sir.' And tears rose to her eyes at the admission, while her mouth rounded with awe at my amazing perspicacity. 'And you mean to send him some dragon's blood as a love potion?' 'No, sir; you've got to mix it with water you've fetched from the Three Sisters' Well, and drink it yourself in nine sips on nine nights running, and get into bed without once looking in the glass, and then if you've done everything properly, and haven't made any mistake, he'll come back to you, an' love you twice as much as before.' 'And la mère Todevinn (Tostevin) gave you that precious recipe, and made you cross her hand with silver into the bargain,' said I severely; on which the tears began to flow outright.

"You know the old lady," said Mauger, breaking off his narration, "who lives in the curious stone house at the corner of the market-place? A reputed witch who learned both black and white magic from her mother, who was a daughter of Hélier Mouton, the famous sorcerer of Cakeuro. I could tell you some funny stories relating to la Mère Todevinn, who numbers more clients among the officers and fine ladies here than in any other class; and very curious, too, is the history of that stone house, with the Brancourt arms still sculptured on the side. You can see them, if you turn down by the Water-gate. This old sinister-looking building,

building, or rather portion of a building, for more modern houses have been built over the greater portion of the site, and now press upon it from either hand, once belonged to one of the finest mansions in the islands, but through a curse and a crime has been brought down to its present condition; while the Brancourt family have long since been utterly extinct. But all this isn't the story of Elsie Mahy, which turned out to be the name of my little customer.

"The Mahys are of the Vauvert parish, and Pierre Jean, the father of this girl, began life as a day-labourer, took to tomato-growing on borrowed capital, and now owns a dozen glass-houses of his own. Mrs. Mahy does some dairy-farming on a minute scale, the profits of which she and Miss Elsie share as pin-money. The young man who is courting Elsie is a son of Toumes the builder. He probably had something to do with the putting up of Mahy's greenhouses, but anyhow, he has been constantly over at Vauvert during the last six months, superintending the alterations at de Câterelle's place.

"Toumes, it would seem, is a devoted but imperious lover, and the Persian and Median laws are as butter compared with the inflexibility of his decisions. The little rift within the lute, which has lately turned all the music to discord, occurred last Monday week—bank-holiday, as you may remember. The Sunday school to which Elsie belongs—and it's a strange anomaly, isn't it, that a girl going to Sunday school should still have a rooted belief in white magic?—the school was to go for an outing to Prawn Bay, and Toumes had arranged to join his sweetheart at the starting-point. But he had made her promise that if by any chance he should be delayed, she would not go with the others, but would wait until he came to fetch her.

"Of course, it so happened that he was detained, and, equally of course,

course, Elsie, like a true woman, went off without him. She did all she knew to make me believe she went quite against her own wishes, that her companions forced her to go. The beautifully yielding nature of a woman never comes out so conspicuously as when she is being coerced into following her own secret desires. Anyhow, Toumes, arriving some time later, found her gone. He followed on, and under ordinary circumstances, I suppose, a sharp reprimand would have been considered sufficient. Unfortunately, the young man arrived on the scene to find his truant love deep in the frolics of kiss-in-the-ring. After tea in the Câterelle Arms, the whole party had adjourned to a neighbouring meadow, and were thus whiling away the time to the exhilarating strains of a French horn and a concertina. Elsie was led into the centre of the ring by various country bumpkins, and kissed beneath the eyes of heaven, of her neighbours, and of her embittered swain.

"You may have been amongst us long enough to know that the Toumes family are of a higher social grade than the Mahys, and I suppose the Misses Toumes never in their lives stooped to anything so ungenteel as public kiss-in-the-ring. It was not surprising, therefore, to hear that after this incident 'me an' my young man had words,' as Elsie put it.

"Note," said Mauger, "the descriptive truth of this expression 'having words.' Among the unlettered, lovers only do have words when vexed. At other times they will sit holding hands throughout a long summer's afternoon, and not exchange two remarks an hour. Love seals their tongue; anger alone unlooses it, and, naturally, when unloosened, it runs on, from sheer want of practice, a great deal faster and farther than they desire.

"So, life being thorny and youth being vain, they parted late that same evening, with the understanding that they would meet no more; and to be wroth with one we love worked its usual harrowing

harrowing effects. Toumes took to billiards and brandy, Elsie to tears and invocations of Beelzebub; then came Mère Todevinn's recipe, my own more powerful potion, and now once more all is silence and balmy peace."

"Do you mean to tell me you sold the child a charm, and didn't enlighten her as to its futility?"

"I sold her some bicarbonate of soda worth a couple of *doubles*, and charged her five shillings for it into the bargain," said Mauger unblushingly. "A wrinkle I learned from once overhearing an old lady I had treated for nothing expatiating to a crony, 'Eh, but, my good, my good! dat Mr. Major, I don't t'ink much of him. He give away his add-vice an' his meddecines for nuddin. Dey not wort nuddin' neider, for sure.' So I made Elsie hand me over five British shillings, and gave her the powder, and told her to drink it with her meals. But I threw in another prescription, which, if less important, must nevertheless be punctiliously carried out, if the charm was to have any effect. 'The very next time,' I told her, 'that you meet your young man in the street, walk straight up to him without looking to the right or to the left, and hold out your hand, saying these words: "Please, I so want to be friends again!" Then if you've been a good girl, have taken the powder regularly, and not forgotten one of my directions, you'll find that all will come right.'

"Now, little as you may credit it," said Mauger, smiling, "the charm worked, for all that we live in the so-called nineteenth century. Elsie came into the shop only yesterday to tell me the results, and to thank me very prettily. 'I shall always come to you now, sir,' she was good enough to say, 'I mean, if anything was to go wrong again. You know a great deal more than Mère Todevinn, I'm sure.' 'Yes, I'm a famous sorcerer,' said I, 'but you had better not speak about the powder. You are wise enough to

to see that it was just your own conduct in meeting your young man rather more than halfway, that did the trick—eh?' She looked at me with eyes brimming over with wisdom. 'You needn't be afraid, sir, I'll not speak of it. Mère Todevinn always made me promise to keep silence too. But of course I know it was the powder that worked the charm.'

"And to that belief the dear creature will stick to the last day of her life. Women are wonderful enigmas. Explain to them that tight-lacing displaces all the internal organs, and show them diagrams to illustrate your point, they smile sweetly, say, 'Oh, how funny!' and go out to buy their new stays half an inch smaller than their old ones. But tell them they must never pass a pin in the street for luck's sake, if it lies with its point towards them, and they will sedulously look for and pick up every such confounded pin they see. Talk to a woman of the marvels of science, and she turns a deaf ear, or refuses point-blank to believe you; yet she is absolutely all ear for any old wife's tale, drinks it greedily in, and never loses hold of it for the rest of her days."

"But does she?" said I; "that's the point in dispute, and though your story shows there's still a commendable amount of superstition in the Islands, I'm afraid if you were to come to London, you would not find sufficient to cover a threepenny-piece."

"Woman is woman all the world over," said Mauger sententiously, "no matter what mental garb happens to be in fashion at the time. *Grattez la femme et vous trouvez la folle.* For see here: if I had said to Mademoiselle Elsie, 'Well, you were in the wrong; it's your place to take the first step towards reconciliation,' she would have laughed in my face, or flung out of the shop in a rage. But because I sold her a little humbugging powder under the guise

guise of a charm, she submitted herself with the docility of a pet lambkin. No; one need never hope to prevail through wisdom with a woman, and if I could have realised that ten years ago, it would have been better for me."

He fell silent, thinking of his past, which to me, who knew it, seemed almost an excuse for his cynicism. I sought a change of idea. The splendour of the pageant outside supplied me with one.

The sun had set; and all the eastern world of sky and water, stretching before us, was steeped in the glories of the after-glow. The ripples seemed painted in dabs of metallic gold upon a surface of polished blue-grey steel. Over the islands opposite hung a far-reaching golden cloud, with faint-drawn, up-curled edges, as though thinned out upon the sky by some monster brush; and while I watched it, this cloud changed from gold to rose-colour, and instantly the steel mirror of the sea glowed rosy too, and was streaked and shaded with a wonderful rosy-brown. As the colour grew momentarily more intense in the sky above, so did the sea appear to pulse to a more vivid copperish-rose, until at last it was like nothing so much as a sea of flowing fire. And the cloud flamed fiery too, yet all the while its up-curled edges rested in exquisite contrast upon a background of most cool cerulean blue.

The little sailing-boat, which I had noticed an hour previously, reappeared from behind the Point. The sail was lowered as it entered the harbour, and the boatman took to his oars. I watched it creep over the glittering water until it vanished beneath the window-sill. I got up and went over to the window to hold it still in sight. It was sculled by a young man in rosy shirt-sleeves, and opposite to him, in the stern, sat a girl in a rosy gown.

So long as I had observed them, not one word had either spoken.

In

In silence they had crossed the harbour, in silence the sculler had brought his craft alongside the landing-stage, and secured her to a ring in the stones. Still silent, he helped his companion to step out upon the quay.

"Here," said I, to Mauger, "is a couple confirming your 'silent' theory with a vengeance. We must suppose that much love has rendered them absolutely dumb."

He came, and leaned from the window too.

"It's not *a* couple, but *the* couple," said he; "and after all, in spite of cheap jesting, there are some things more eloquent than speech." For at this instant, finding themselves alone upon the jetty, the young man had taken the girl into his arms, and she had lifted a frank responsive mouth to return his kiss.

Five minutes later the sea had faded into dull greys and sober browns, starved white clouds moved dispiritedly over a vacant sky, and by cricking the back of my neck I was able to follow Toumes' black coat and the white frock of Miss Elsie until they reached Poidevin's wine-vaults, and, turning up the Water-gate, were lost to view.

Fleurs de Feu

By José Maria de Hérédia
of the French Academy

BIEN des siècles depuis les siècles du Chaos,
La flamme par torrents jaillit de ce cratère
Et le panache igné du volcan solitaire
Flamba encore plus haut que les Chimborazos.

Nul bruit n'éveille plus la cime sans échos.
Où la cendre pleuvait l'oiseau se désaltère ;
Le sol est immobile, et le sang de la Terre
La lave, en se figeant, lui laissa le repos.

Pourtant, suprême effort de l'antique incendie,
A l'orle de la gueule à jamais refroidie,
Éclatant a travers les rocs pulvérisés.

Comme un coup de tonnerre au milieu du silence,
Dans le poudroîement d'or du pollen qu'elle lance,
S'épanouit la fleur des cactus embrasés.

Flowers of Fire

A Translation, by
Ellen M. Clerke

For ages since the age of Chaos passed,
Flame shot in torrents from this crater pyre,
And the red plume of the volcano's ire
Higher than Chimborazo's crown was cast.

No sound awakes the summit, voiceless, vast,
The bird now sips where rained the ashes dire,
The soil is moveless, and Earth's blood on fire,
The lava—hardening—gives it peace at last.

But, crowning effort of the fires of old,
Close by the gaping jaws, for ever cold,
Gleaming 'mid rocks that crumble in the gloom,

As with a thunderclap in hush profound,
'Mid golden dust of pollen hurled around,
The burning cactus blazes into bloom.

When I am King

By Henry Harland

"Qu'y faire, mon Dieu, qu'y faire?"

I HAD wandered into a tangle of slummy streets, and began to think it time to inquire my way back to the hotel; then, turning a corner, I came out upon the quays. At one hand there was the open night, with the dim forms of many ships, and stars hanging in a web of masts and cordage; at the other, the garish illumination of a row of public-houses: *Au Bonheur du Matelot*, *Café de la Marine*, *Brasserie des Quatre Vents*, and so forth; rowdy-looking shops enough, designed for the entertainment of the forecastle. But they seemed to promise something in the nature of local colour; and I entered the *Brasserie des Quatre Vents*.

It proved to be a *brasserie-à-femmes;* you were waited upon by ladies, lavishly rouged and in regardless toilets, who would sit with you and chat, and partake of refreshments at your expense. The front part of the room was filled up with tables, where half a hundred customers, talking at the top of their voices, raised a horrid din—sailors, soldiers, a few who might be clerks or tradesmen, and an occasional workman in his blouse. Beyond, there was a cleared space, reserved for dancing, occupied by a dozen couples,

couples, clumsily toeing it; and on a platform, at the far end, a man pounded a piano. All this in an atmosphere hot as a furnace-blast, and poisonous with the fumes of gas, the smells of bad tobacco, of musk, alcohol, and humanity.

The musician faced away from the company, so that only his shoulders and the back of his grey head were visible, bent over his keyboard. It was sad to see a grey head in that situation; and one wondered what had brought it there, what story of vice or weakness or evil fortune. Though his instrument was harsh, and he had to bang it violently to be heard above the roar of conversation, the man played with a kind of cleverness, and with certain fugitive suggestions of good style. He had once studied an art, and had hopes and aspirations, who now, in his age, was come to serve the revels of a set of drunken sailors, in a disreputable tavern, where they danced with prostitutes. I don't know why, but from the first he drew my attention; and I left my handmaid to count her charms neglected, while I sat and watched him, speculating about him in a melancholy way, with a sort of vicarious shame.

But presently something happened to make me forget him—something of his own doing. A dance had ended, and after a breathing spell he began to play an interlude. It was an instance of how tunes, like perfumes, have the power to wake sleeping memories. The tune he was playing now, simple and dreamy like a lullaby, and strangely at variance with the surroundings, whisked me off in a twinkling, far from the actual—ten, fifteen years backwards—to my student life in Paris, and set me to thinking, as I had not thought for many a long day, of my hero, friend, and comrade, Edmund Pair; for it was a tune of Pair's composition, a melody he had written to a nursery rhyme, and used to sing a good deal, half in fun, half in earnest, to his lady-love, Godelinette:

"Lavender's

"Lavender's blue, diddle-diddle,
Lavender's green;
When I am king, diddle-diddle,
You shall be queen."

It is certain he meant very seriously that if he ever came into his kingdom Godelinette should be queen. The song had been printed, but, so far as I knew, had never had much vogue; and it seemed an odd chance that this evening, in a French seaport town where I was passing a single night, I should stray by hazard into a sailors' pothouse and hear it again.

Edmund Pair lived in the Latin Quarter when I did, but he was no longer a mere student. He had published a good many songs; articles had been written about them in the newspapers; and at his rooms you would meet the men who had "arrived"—actors, painters, musicians, authors, and now and then a politician—who thus recognised him as more or less one of themselves. Everybody liked him; everybody said, "He is splendidly gifted; he will go far." A few of us already addressed him, half-playfully perhaps, as *cher maître*.

He was three or four years older than I—eight or nine and twenty to my twenty-five—and I was still in the schools; but for all that we were great chums. Quite apart from his special talent, he was a remarkable man—amusing in talk, good-looking, generous, affectionate. He had read; he had travelled; he had hob-and-nobbed with all sorts and conditions of people. He had wit, imagination, humour, and a voice that made whatever he said a cordial to the ear. For myself I admired him, enjoyed him, loved him, with equal fervour; he had all of my hero-worship and the lion's share of my friendship; perhaps I was vain as well as glad to be distinguished by his intimacy. We used to spend two or three

three evenings a week together, at his place or at mine, or over the table of a café, talking till the small hours—Elysian sessions, at which we smoked more cigarettes and emptied more *bocks* than I should care to count. On Sundays and holidays we would take long walks arm-in-arm in the Bois, or, accompanied by Godelinette, go to Viroflay or Fontainebleau, lunch in the open, bedeck our hats with wildflowers, and romp like children. He was tall and slender, with dark waving hair, a delicate aquiline profile, a clear brown skin, and grey eyes, alert, intelligent, kindly. I fancy the Boulevard St. Michel, flooded with sunshine, broken here and there by long crisp shadows ; trams and omnibuses toiling up the hill, tooting their horns ; students and *étudiantes* sauntering gaily backwards and forwards on the *trottoir ;* an odour of asphalte, of caporal tobacco ; myself one of the multitude on the terrace of a café ; and Edmund and Godelinette coming to join me—he with his swinging stride, a gesture of salutation, a laughing face ; she in the freshest of bright-coloured spring toilets : I fancy this, and it seems an adventure of the golden age. Then we would drink our *apéritifs*, our Turin bitter, perhaps our absinthe, and go off to dine together in the garden at Lavenue's.

Godelinette was a child of the people, but Pair had done wonders by way of civilising her. She had learned English, and prattled it with an accent so quaint and sprightly as to give point to her otherwise perhaps somewhat commonplace observations. She was fond of reading ; she could play a little ; she was an excellent housewife, and generally a very good-natured and quite presentable little person. She was Parisian and adaptable. To meet her, you would never have suspected her origin ; you would have found it hard to believe that she had been the wife of a drunken tailor, who used to beat her. One January night, four or five years before, Pair had surprised this gentleman publicly pummelling

pummelling her in the Rue Gay-Lussac. He hastened to remonstrate; and the husband went off, hiccoughing of his outraged rights, and calling the universe to witness that he would have the law of the meddling stranger. Pair picked the girl up (she was scarcely eighteen then, and had only been married a sixmonth), he picked her up from where she had fallen, half fainting, on the pavement, carried her to his lodgings, which were at hand, and sent for a doctor. In his manuscript-littered study for rather more than nine weeks she lay on a bed of fever, the consequence of blows, exhaustion, and exposure. When she got well there was no talk of her leaving. Pair couldn't let her go back to her tailor; he couldn't turn her into the streets. Besides, during the months that he had nursed her, he had somehow conceived a great tenderness for her; it made his heart burn with grief and anger to think of what she had suffered in the past, and he yearned to sustain and protect and comfort her for the future. This perhaps was no more than natural; but, what rather upset the calculations of his friends, she, towards whom he had established himself in the relation of a benefactor, bore him, instead of a grudge therefor, a passionate gratitude and affection. So, Pair said, they were only waiting till her tailor should drink himself to death, to get married; and meanwhile, he exacted for her all the respect that would have been due to his wife; and everybody called her by his name. She was a pretty little thing, very daintily formed, with tiny hands and feet, and big gipsyish brown eyes; and very delicate, very fragile—she looked as if anything might carry her off. Her name, Godeleine, seeming much too grand and mediæval for so small and actual a person, Pair had turned it into Godelinette.

We all said, "He is splendidly gifted; he will do great things." He had studied at Cambridge and at Leipsic before coming to Paris. He was learned, enlightened, and extremely modern; he was

was a hard worker. We said he would do great things ; but I thought in those days, and indeed I still think—and, what is more to the purpose, men who were themselves musicians and composers, men whose names are known, were before me in thinking—that he had already done great things, that the songs he had already published were achievements. They seemed to us original in conception, accomplished and felicitous in treatment ; they were full of melody and movement, full of harmonic surprises ; they had style and they had "go." One would have imagined they must please at once the cultivated and the general public. I could never understand why they weren't popular. They would be printed ; they would be praised at length, and under distinguished signatures, in the reviews ; they would enjoy an unusual success of approbation ; but—they wouldn't *sell*, and they wouldn't get themselves sung at concerts. If they had been too good, if they had been over the heads of people—but they weren't. Plenty of work quite as good, quite as modern, yet no whit more tuneful or interesting, was making its authors rich. We couldn't understand it, we had to conclude it was a fluke, a question of chance, of accident. Pair was still a very young man ; he must go on knocking, and some day—to-morrow, next week, next year, but some day certainly—the door of public favour would be opened to him. Meanwhile his position was by no means an unenviable one, goodness knows. To have your orbit in the art world of Paris, and to be recognised there as a star ; to be written about in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes ;* to possess the friendship of the masters, to know that they believe in you, to hear them prophesy, "He will do great things"—all that is something, even if your wares don't "take on" in the market-place.

"It's a good job, though, that I haven't got to live by them," Pair said ; and there indeed he touched a salient point. His people

people were dead; his father had been a younger son; he had no money of his own. But his father's elder brother, a squire in Hampshire, made him rather a liberal allowance, something like six hundred a year, I believe, which was opulence in the Latin Quarter. Now, the squire had been aware of Pair's relation with Godelinette from its inception, and had not disapproved. On his visits to Paris he had dined with them, given them dinners, and treated her with the utmost complaisance. But when, one fine morning, her tailor died, and my quixotic friend announced his intention of marrying her, *dans les délais légaux*, the squire protested. I think I read the whole correspondence, and I remember that in the beginning the elder man took the tone of paradox and banter. "Behave dishonourably, my dear fellow. I have winked at your mistress heretofore, because boys will be boys; but it is the *man* who marries. And, anyhow, a woman is so much more interesting in a false position." But he soon became serious, presently furious, and, when the marriage was an accomplished fact, cut off the funds.

"Never mind, my dear," said Pair. "We will go to London and seek our fortune. We will write the songs of the people, and let who will make the laws. We will grow rich and famous, and

'When I am king, diddle-diddle,
You shall be queen!'"

So they went to London to seek their fortune, and—that was the last I ever saw of them, nearly the last I heard. I had two letters from Pair, written within a month of their hegira—gossipy, light-hearted letters, describing the people they were meeting, reporting Godelinette's quaint observations upon England and English things, explaining his hopes, his intentions, all very confidently

confidently—and then I had no more. I wrote again, and still again, till, getting no answer, of course I ceased to write. I was hurt and puzzled; but in the spring we should meet in London, and could have it out. When the spring came, however, my plans were altered: I had to go to America. I went by way of Havre, expecting to stay six weeks, and was gone six years.

On my return to England I said to people, "You have a brilliant young composer named Pair. Can you put me in the way of procuring his address?" The fortune he had come to seek he would surely have found; he would be a known man. But people looked blank, and declared they had never heard of him. I applied to music-publishers—with the same result. I wrote to his uncle in Hampshire; the squire did not reply. When I reached Paris I inquired of our friends there; they were as ignorant as I. "He must be dead," I concluded. "If he had lived, it is impossible we should not have heard of him." And I wondered what had become of Godelinette.

Then another eight or ten years passed, and now, in a water-side public at Bordeaux, an obscure old pianist was playing Pair's setting of "Lavender's blue," and stirring a hundred bitter-sweet far-away memories of my friend. It was as if fifteen years were erased from my life. The face of Godelinette was palpable before me—pale, with its sad little smile, its bright appealing eyes. Edmund might have been smoking across the table—I could hear his voice, I could have put out my hand and touched him. And all round me were the streets, the lights, the smells, the busy youthful *va-et-vient* of the Latin Quarter; and in my heart the yearning, half joy and all despair and anguish, with which we think of the old days when we were young, of how real and dear they were, of how irrecoverable they are.

And then the music stopped, the Brasserie des Quatre Vents became

became a glaring reality, and the painted female sipping *eau-de-vie* at my elbow remarked plaintively, "Tu n'es pas rigolo, toi. Vieux-tu faire une valse?"

"I must speak to your musician," I said. "Excuse me."

He had played a bit of Pair's music. It was one chance in a thousand, but I wanted to ask him whether he could tell me anything about the composer. So I penetrated to the bottom of the shop, and approached his platform. He was bending over some sheets of music—making his next selection, doubtless.

"I beg your pardon——" I began.

He turned towards me. You will not be surprised—I was looking into Pair's own face.

You will not be surprised, but you will imagine what it was for me. Oh, yes, I recognised him instantly; there could be no mistake. And he recognised me, for he flushed, and winced, and started back.

I suppose for a little while we were both of us speechless, speechless and motionless, while our hearts stopped beating. By-and-by I think I said—something had to be said to break the situation—I think I said, "It's you, Edmund?" I remember he fumbled with a sheet of music, and kept his eyes bent on it, and muttered something inarticulate. Then there was another speechless, helpless suspension. He continued to fumble his music, without looking up. At last I remember saying, through a sort of sickness and giddiness, "Let us get out of here—where we can talk."

"I can't leave yet. I've got another dance," he answered.

"Well, I'll wait," said I.

I sat down near him and waited, trying to create some kind of order

order out of the chaos in my mind, and half automatically watching and considering him as he played his dance—Edmund Pair playing a dance for prostitutes and drunken sailors. He was not greatly changed. There were the same grey eyes, deep-set and wide apart, under the same broad forehead; the same fine nose and chin, the same sensitive mouth. The whole face was pretty much the same, only thinner perhaps, and with a look of apathy, of inanimation, that was foreign to my recollection of it. His hair had turned quite white, but otherwise he appeared no older than his years. His figure, tall, slender, well-knit, retained its vigour and its distinction. Though he wore a shabby brown Norfolk jacket, and his beard was two days old, you could in no circumstances have taken him for anything but a gentleman. I waited anxiously for the time when we should be alone—anxiously, yet with a sort of terror. I was burning to understand, and yet I shrunk from doing so. If to conjecture even vaguely what experiences could have brought him to this, what dark things suffered or done, had been melancholy when he was a nameless old musician, now it was appalling, and I dreaded the explanation that I longed to hear.

At last he struck his final chord, and rose from the piano. Then he turned to me and said, composedly enough, "Well, I'm ready." He, apparently, had in some measure pulled himself together. In the street he took my arm. "Let's walk in this direction," he said, leading off, "towards the Christian quarter of the town." And in a moment he went on: "This has been an odd meeting. What brings you to Bordeaux?"

I explained that I was on my way to Biarritz, stopping for the night between two trains.

"Then it's all the more surprising that you should have stumbled into the Brasserie des Quatre Vents. You've altered very

very slightly. The world wags well with you? You look prosperous."

I cried out some incoherent protest. Afterwards I said, "You know what I want to hear. What does this mean?"

He laughed nervously. "Oh, the meaning's clear enough. It speaks for itself."

"I don't understand," said I.

"I'm pianist to the Brasserie des Quatre Vents. You saw me in the discharge of my duties."

"I don't understand," I repeated helplessly.

"And yet the inference is plain. What could have brought a man to such a pass save drink or evil courses?"

"Oh, don't trifle," I implored him.

"I'm not trifling. That's the worst of it. For I don't drink, and I'm not conscious of having pursued any especially evil courses."

"Well?" I questioned. "Well?"

"The fact of the matter simply is that I'm what they call a failure. I never came off."

"I don't understand," I repeated for a third time.

"No more do I, if you come to that. It's the will of Heaven, I suppose. Anyhow, it can't puzzle you more than it puzzles me. It seems contrary to the whole logic of circumstances, but it's the fact."

Thus far he had spoken listlessly, with a sort of bitter levity, an affectation of indifference; but after a little silence his mood appeared to change. His hand upon my arm tightened its grasp, and he began to speak rapidly, feelingly.

"Do you realise that it is nearly fifteen years since we have seen each other? The history of those fifteen years, so far as I am concerned, has been the history of a single uninterrupted *déveine*—one continuous run of ill-luck, against every probability of

of the game, against every effort I could make to play my cards effectively. When I started out, one might have thought, I had the best of chances. I had studied hard; I worked hard. I surely had as much general intelligence, as much special knowledge, as much apparent talent, as my competitors. And the stuff I produced seemed good to you, to my friends, and not wholly bad to me. It was musicianly, it was melodious, it was sincere; the critics all praised it; but—it never took on! The public wouldn't have it. What did it lack? I don't know. At last I couldn't even get it published—invisible ink! And I had a wife to support."

He paused for a minute; then: "You see," he said, "we made the mistake, when we were young, of believing, against wise authority, that it *was* in mortals to command success, that he could command it who deserved it. We believed that the race would be to the swift, the battle to the strong; that a man was responsible for his own destiny, that he'd get what he merited. We believed that honest labour couldn't go unrewarded. An immense mistake. Success is an affair of temperament, like faith, like love, like the colour of your hair. Oh, the old story about industry, resolution, and no vices! I was industrious, I was resolute, and I had no more than the common share of vices. But I had the unsuccessful temperament; and here I am. If my motives had been ignoble—but I can't see that they were. I wanted to earn a decent living; I wanted to justify my existence by doing something worthy of the world's acceptance. But the stars in their courses fought against me. I have tried hard to convince myself that the music I wrote was rubbish. It had its faults, no doubt. It wasn't great, it wasn't epoch-making. But, as music goes nowadays, it was jolly good. It was a jolly sight better than the average."

"Oh,

"Oh, that is certain, that is certain," I exclaimed, as he paused again.

"Well, anyhow, it didn't sell, and at last I couldn't even get it published. So then I tried to find other work. I tried everything. I tried to teach—harmony and the theory of composition. I couldn't get pupils. So few people want to study that sort of thing, and there were good masters already in the place. If I had known how to play, indeed! But I was never better than a fifth-rate executant; I had never gone in for that; my 'lay' was composition. I couldn't give piano lessons, I couldn't play in public—unless in a *gargotte* like the hole we have just left. Oh, I tried everything. I tried to get musical criticism to do for the newspapers. Surely I was competent to do musical criticism. But no—they wouldn't employ me. I had ill luck, ill luck, ill luck—nothing but ill luck, defeat, disappointment. Was it the will of Heaven? I wondered what unforgiveable sin I had committed to be punished so. Do you know what it is like to work and pray and wait, day after day, and watch day after day come and go and bring you nothing? Oh, I tasted the whole heart-sickness of hope deferred; Giant Despair was my constant bed-fellow."

"But—with your connections——" I began.

"Oh, my connections!" he cried. "There was the rub, London is the cruellest town in Europe. For sheer cold blood and heartlessness give Londoners the palm. I had connections enough for the first month or so, and then people found out things that didn't concern them. They found out some things that were true, and they imagined other things that were false. They wouldn't have my wife; they told the most infamous lies about her; and I wouldn't have *them*. Could I be civil to people who insulted and slandered *her?* I had no connections in London, except with the underworld. I got down to copying parts for theatrical

theatrical orchestras; and working twelve hours a day, earned about thirty shillings a week."

"You might have come back to Paris."

"And fared worse. I couldn't have earned thirty pence in Paris. Mind you, the only trade I had learned was that of a musical composer; and I couldn't compose music that people would buy. I should have starved as a copyist in Paris, where copyists are more numerous and worse paid. Teach there? But to one competent master of harmony in London there are ten in Paris. No; it was a hopeless case."

"It is incomprehensible—incomprehensible," said I.

"But wait—wait till you've heard the end. One would think I had had enough—not so? One would think my cup of bitterness was full. No fear! There was a stronger cup still a-brewing for me. When Fortune takes a grudge against a man, she never lets up. She exacts the uttermost farthing. I was pretty badly off, but I had one treasure left—I had Godelinette. I used to think that she was my compensation. I would say to myself, 'A fellow can't have all blessings. How can you expect others, when you've got her?' And I would accuse myself of ingratitude for complaining of my unsuccess. Then she fell ill. My God, how I watched over, prayed over her! It seemed impossible—I could not believe—that she would be taken from me. Yet, Harry, do you know what that poor child was thinking? Do you know what her dying thoughts were—her wishes? Throughout her long painful illness she was thinking that she was an obstacle in my way, a weight upon me; that if it weren't for her, I should get on, have friends, a position; that it would be a good thing for me if she should die; and she was hoping in her poor little heart that she wouldn't get well! Oh, I know it, I knew it—and you see me here alive. She let herself die for my sake—as if I could

care

care for anything without her! That's what brought us here, to France, to Bordeaux—her illness. The doctors said she must pass the spring out of England, away from the March winds, in the South; and I begged and borrowed money enough to take her. And we were on our way to Arcachon; but when we reached Bordeaux she was too ill to continue the journey, and—she died here."

We walked on for some distance in silence, then he added: "That was four years ago. You wonder why I live to tell you of it, why I haven't cut my throat. I don't know whether it's cowardice or conscientious scruples. It seems rather inconsequent to say that I believe in a God, doesn't it?—that I believe one's life is not one's own to make an end of? Anyhow, here I am, keeping body and soul together as musician to a *brasserie-à-femmes*. I can't go back to England, I can't leave Bordeaux—she's buried here. I've hunted high and low for work, and found it nowhere save in the *brasserie-à-femmes*. With that, and a little copying now and then, I manage to pay my way."

"But your uncle?" I asked.

"Do you think I would touch a penny of his money?" Pair retorted, almost fiercely. "It was he who began it. My wife let herself die. It was virtual suicide. It was he who created the situation that drove her to it."

"You are his heir, though, aren't you?"

"No, the estates are not entailed."

We had arrived at the door of my hotel. "Well, good-night and *bon voyage*," he said.

"You needn't wish me *bon voyage*," I answered. "Of course I'm not leaving Bordeaux for the present."

"Oh, yes, you are. You're going on to Biarritz to-morrow morning, as you intended."

And

And herewith began a long and most painful struggle. I could persuade him to accept no help of any sort from me. "What I can't do for myself," he declared, "I'll do without. My dear fellow, all that you propose is contrary to the laws of Nature. One man can't keep another—it's an impossible relation. And I won't be kept; I won't be a burden. Besides, to tell you the truth, I've got past caring. The situation you find me in seems terrible to you; to me it's no worse than another. You see, I'm hardened; I've got past caring."

"At any rate," I insisted, "I shan't go on to Biarritz. I'll spend my holiday here, and we can see each other every day. What time shall we meet to-morrow?"

"No, no, I can't meet you again. Don't ask me to; you mean it kindly, I know, but you're mistaken. It's done me good to talk it all out to you, but I can't meet you again. I've got no heart for friendship, and—you remind me too keenly of many things."

"But if I come to the *brasserie* to-morrow night?"

"Oh, if you do that, you'll oblige me to throw up my employment there, and hide from you. You must promise not to come again—you must respect my wishes."

"You're cruel, you know."

"Perhaps, perhaps. But I think I'm only reasonable. Anyhow, good-bye."

He shook my hand hurriedly, and moved off. What could I do? I stood looking after him till he had vanished in the night, with a miserable baffled recognition of my helplessness to help him.

To a Bunch of Lilac

By Theo Marzials

" Dis-moi la fleur, je te dirai la femme"

Is it the April springing,
Or the bird in the breeze above?
My throat is full of singing,
My heart is full of love.

O heart, are you not yet broken?
O dream, so done with and dead,
Is life's one word not spoken,
And the rede of it all not read?

No hope in the whole world over!
No hope in the infinite blue!
Yet I sing and laugh out like a lover—
Oh, who is it, April—who?

And the glad young year is springing;
And the birds, and the breeze above,
And the shrill tree-tops, are singing—
And I am singing—of love.

* * * *

O beautiful

To a Bunch of Lilac

O beautiful lilac flowers,
Oh, say, is it you, is it you
The sun-struck, love-sick hours
Go faint for murmuring through?

O full of ineffable yearning,
So balmy, mystical, deep,
And faint beyond any discerning,
Like far-off voices in sleep—

I love you, O lilac, I love you!
Till life goes swooning by,
I breathe and enwreathe and enfold you,
And long but to love, and die.

From a Pastel

By Albert Foschter

Apple Blossom in Brittany

By Ernest Dowson

I

It was the feast of the Assumption in Ploumariel, at the hottest part of the afternoon. Benedict Campion, who had just assisted at vespers, in the little dove-cotted church—like everything else in Ploumariel, even vespers were said earlier than is the usage in towns—took up his station in the market-place to watch the procession pass by. The head of it was just then emerging into the Square: a long file of men from the neighbouring villages, bare-headed and chaunting, followed the crucifer. They were all clad in the picturesque garb of the Morbihan peasantry, and were many of them imposing, quite noble figures with their clear-cut Breton features, and their austere type of face. After them a troop of young girls, with white veils over their heads, carrying banners—children from the convent school of the Ursulines; and then, two and two in motley assemblage (peasant women with their white coifs walking with the wives and daughters of prosperous *bourgeois* in costumes more civilised but far less pictorial) half the inhabitants of Ploumariel—all, indeed, who had not, with Campion, preferred to be spectators, taking refuge from a broiling sun under the grateful shadow of the chest-

nuts

nuts in the market-place. Last of all a muster of clergy, four or five strong, a small choir of bullet-headed boys, and the Curé of the parish himself, Monsieur Letêtre chaunting from his book, who brought up the rear.

Campion, leaning against his chestnut tree, watched them defile. Once a smile of recognition flashed across his face, which was answered by a girl in the procession. She just glanced from her book, and the smile with which she let her eyes rest upon him for a moment, before she dropped them, did not seem to detract from her devotional air. She was very young and slight—she might have been sixteen—and she had a singularly pretty face; her white dress was very simple, and her little straw hat, but both of these she wore with an air which at once set her apart from her companions, with their provincial finery and their rather commonplace charms. Campion's eyes followed the little figure until it was lost in the distance, disappearing with the procession down a by-street on its return journey to the church. And after they had all passed, the singing, the last verse of the "Ave Maris Stella," was borne across to him, through the still air, the voices of children pleasantly predominating. He put on his hat at last, and moved away; every now and then he exchanged a greeting with somebody—the communal doctor, the mayor; while here and there a woman explained him to her gossip in whispers as he passed, "It is the Englishman of Mademoiselle Marie-Ursule—it is M. le Curé's guest." It was to the dwelling of M. le Curé, indeed, that Campion now made his way. Five minutes' walk brought him to it; an unpretentious white house, lying back in its large garden, away from the dusty road. It was an untidy garden, rather useful than ornamental; a very little shade was offered by one incongruous plane-tree, under which a wooden table was placed and some chairs. After *déjeûner*, on those hot August days, Campion

Campion and the Curé took their coffee here ; and in the evening it was here that they sat and talked while Mademoiselle Hortense, the Curé's sister, knitted, or appeared to knit, an interminable shawl ; the young girl, Marie-Ursule, placidly completing the quartet with her silent, felicitous smile of a convent-bred child, which seemed sometimes, at least to Campion, to be after all a finer mode of conversation. He threw himself down now on the bench, wondering when his hosts would have finished their devotions, and drew a book from his pocket as if he would read. But he did not open it, but sat for a long time holding it idly in his hand, and gazing out at the village, at the expanse of dark pine-covered hills, and at the one trenchant object in the foreground, the white façade of the convent of the Ursuline nuns. Once and again he smiled, as though his thoughts, which had wandered a long way, had fallen upon extraordinarily pleasant things. He was a man of barely forty, though he looked slightly older than his age : his little, peaked beard was grizzled, and a life spent in literature, and very studiously, had given him the scholar's premature stoop. He was not handsome, but, when he smiled, his smile was so pleasant that people credited him with good looks. It brought, moreover, such a light of youth into his eyes, as to suggest that if his avocations had unjustly aged his body, that had not been without its compensations—his soul had remained remarkably young. Altogether, he looked shrewd, kindly and successful, and he was all these things, while if there was also a certain sadness in his eyes—lines of lassitude about his mouth—this was an idiosyncracy of his temperament, and hardly justified by his history, which had always been honourable and smooth. He was sitting in the same calm and presumably agreeable reverie, when the garden gate opened, and a girl—the young girl of the procession, fluttered towards him.

"Are you quite alone?" she asked brightly, seating herself at his side. "Has not Aunt Hortense come back?"

Campion shook his head, and she continued speaking in English, very correctly, but with a slight accent, which gave to her pretty young voice the last charm.

"I suppose she has gone to see *la mère Guémené*. She will not live another night they say. Ah! what a pity," she cried, clasping her hands; "to die on the Assumption—that is hard."

Campion smiled softly. "Dear child, when one's time comes, when one is old as that, the day does not matter much." Then he went on: "But how is it you are back; were you not going to your nuns?"

She hesitated a moment. "It is your last day, and I wanted to make tea for you. You have had no tea this year. Do you think I have forgotten how to make it, while you have been away, as I forget my English words?"

"It's I who am forgetting such an English habit," he protested. "But run away and make it, if you like. I am sure it will be very good."

She stood for a moment looking down at him, her fingers smoothing a little bunch of palest blue ribbons on her white dress. In spite of her youth, her brightness, the expression of her face in repose was serious and thoughtful, full of unconscious wistfulness. This, together with her placid manner, the manner of a child who has lived chiefly with old people and quiet nuns, made her beauty to Campion a peculiarly touching thing. Just then her eyes fell upon Campion's wide-awake, lying on the seat at his side, and travelled to his uncovered head. She uttered a protesting cry: "Are you not afraid of a *coup de soleil?* See—you are not fit to be a guardian if you can be so foolish as that. It is I who have to look after you." She took up the great grey hat and set

set it daintily on his head ; then with a little laugh she disappeared into the house.

When Campion raised his head again, his eyes were smiling, and in the light of a sudden flush which just died out of it, his face looked almost young.

II

This girl, so foreign in her education and traditions, so foreign in the grace of her movements, in everything except the shade of her dark blue eyes, was the child of an English father ; and she was Benedict Campion's ward. This relation, which many persons found incongruous, had befallen naturally enough. Her father had been Campion's oldest and most familiar friend ; and when Richard Heath's romantic marriage had isolated him from so many others, from his family and from his native land, Campion's attachment to him had, if possible, only been increased. From his heart he had approved, had prophesied nothing but good of an alliance, which certainly, while it lasted, had been an wholly ideal relation. There had seemed no cloud on the horizon—and yet less than two years had seen the end of it. The birth of the child, Marie-Ursule, had been her mother's death ; and six months later, Richard Heath, dying less from any defined malady than because he lacked any longer the necessary motive to live, was laid by the side of his wife. The helpless child remained, in the guardianship of Hortense, her mother's sister, and elder by some ten years, who had already composed herself contentedly, as some women do, to the prospect of perpetual spinsterhood, and the care of her brother's house—an ecclesiastic just appointed curé of Ploumariel. And here, ever since, in this quiet corner of Brittany, in

in the tranquil custody of the priest and his sister, Marie-Ursule had grown up.

Campion's share in her guardianship had not been onerous, although it was necessarily maintained ; for the child had inherited, and what small property would come to her was in England, and in English funds. To Hortense Letêtre and her brother such responsibilities in an alien land were not for a moment to be entertained. And gradually, this connection, at first formal and impersonal, between Campion and the Breton presbytery, had developed into an intimacy, into a friendship singularly satisfying on both sides. Separate as their interests seemed, those of the French country-priest, and of the Englishman of letters, famous already in his own department, they had, nevertheless, much community of feeling apart from their common affection for a child. Now, for many years, he had been established in their good graces, so that it had become an habit with him to spend his holiday—it was often a very extended one—at Ploumariel ; while to the Letêtres, as well as to Marie-Ursule herself, this annual sojourn of Campion's had become the occasion of the year, the one event which pleasantly relieved the monotony of life in this remote village ; though that, too, was a not unpleasant routine. Insensibly Campion had come to find his chief pleasure in consideration of this child of an old friend, whose gradual growth beneath influences which seemed to him singularly exquisite and fine, he had watched so long ; whose future, now that her childhood, her schooldays at the convent had come to an end, threatened to occupy him with an anxiety more intimate than any which hitherto he had known. Marie-Ursule's future ! They had talked much of it that summer, the priest and the Englishman, who accompanied him in his long morning walks, through green lanes, and over white, dusty roads, and past fields perfumed with the

the pungently pleasant smell of the blood-red *sarrasin*, when he paid visits to the sick who lived on the outskirts of his scattered parish. Campion became aware then of an increasing difficulty in discussing this matter impersonally, in the impartial manner becoming a guardian. Odd thrills of jealousy stirred within him when he was asked to contemplate Marie-Ursule's possible suitors. And yet, it was with a very genuine surprise, at least for the moment, that he met the Curé's sudden pressing home of a more personal contingency—he took this freedom of an old friend with a shrewd twinkle in his eye, which suggested that all along this had been chiefly in his mind. "*Mon bon ami*, why should you not marry her yourself? That would please all of us so much." And he insisted, with kindly insistence, on the propriety of the thing: dwelling on Campion's established position, their long habit of friendship, his own and his sister's confidence and esteem, taking for granted, with that sure insight which is the gift of many women and of most priests, that on the ground of affection alone the justification was too obvious to be pressed. And he finished with a smile, stopping to take a pinch of snuff with a sigh of relief—the relief of a man who has at least seasonably unburdened himself.

"Surely, *mon ami*, some such possibility must have been in your mind?"

Campion hesitated for a moment; then he proffered his hand, which the other warmly grasped. "You read me aright," he said slowly, "only I hardly realised it before. Even now—no, how can I believe it possible—that she should care for me. *Non sum dignus, non sum dignus.* Consider her youth, her inexperience; the best part of my life is behind me."

But the Curé smiled reassuringly. "The best part is before you, Campion; you have the heart of a boy. Do we not know you?

you? And for the child—rest tranquil there! I have the word of my sister, who is a wise woman, that she is sincerely attached to you; not to speak of the evidence of my own eyes. She will be seventeen shortly, then she can speak for herself. And to whom else can we trust her?"

The shadow of these confidences hung over Campion when he next saw Marie-Ursule, and troubled him vaguely during the remainder of his visit, which this year, indeed, he considerably curtailed. Inevitably he was thrown much with the young girl, and if daily the charm which he found in her presence was sensibly increased, as he studied her from a fresh point of view, he was none the less disquieted at the part which he might be called upon to play. Diffident and scrupulous, a shy man, knowing little of women; and at least by temperament, a sad man, he trembled before felicity, as many at the palpable breath of misfortune. And his difficulty was increased by the conviction, forced upon him irresistibly, little as he could accuse himself of vanity, that the decision rested with himself. Her liking for him was genuine and deep, her confidence implicit. He had but to ask her and she would place her hand in his and go forth with him, as trustfully as a child. And when they came to celebrate her *fête*, Marie-Ursule's seventeenth birthday—it occurred a little before the Assumption—it was almost disinterestedly that he had determined upon his course. At least it was security which he could promise her, as a younger man might not; a constant and single-minded kindness; a devotion not the less valuable, because it was mature and reticent, lacking, perhaps, the jealous ardours of youth. Nevertheless, he was going back to England without having revealed himself; there should be no unseasonable haste in the matter; he would give her another year. The Curé smiled deprecatingly at the procrastination; but on this point Campion was

was firm. And on this, his last evening, he spoke only of trivial things to Marie-Ursule, as they sat presently over the tea—a mild and flavourless beverage—which the young girl had prepared. Yet he noticed later, after their early supper, when she strolled up with him to the hill overlooking the village, a certain new shyness in her manner, a shadow, half timid, half expectant in her clear eyes which permitted him to believe that she was partly prepared. When they reached the summit, stood clear of the pine trees by an ancient stone Calvary, Ploumariel lay below them, very fair in the light of the setting sun ; and they stopped to rest themselves, to admire.

"Ploumariel is very beautiful," said Campion after a while. "Ah! Marie-Ursule, you are fortunate to be here."

"Yes." She accepted his statement simply, then suddenly: "You should not go away." He smiled, his eyes turning from the village in the valley to rest upon her face: after all, she was the daintiest picture, and Ploumariel with its tall slate roofs, its sleeping houses, her appropriate frame.

"I shall come back, I shall come back," he murmured. She had gathered a bunch of ruddy heather as they walked, and her fingers played with it now nervously. Campion stretched out his hand for it. She gave it him without a word.

"I will take it with me to London," he said ; "I will have Morbihan in my rooms."

"It will remind you—make you think of us sometimes?"

For answer he could only touch her hand lightly with his lips. "Do you think that was necessary?" And they resumed their homeward way silently, although to both of them the air seemed heavy with unspoken words.

When

III

When he was in London—and it was in London that for nine months out of the twelve Benedict Campion was to be found—he lived in the Temple, at the top of Hare Court, in the very same rooms in which he had installed himself, years ago, when he gave up his Oxford fellowship, electing to follow the profession of letters. Returning there from Ploumariel, he resumed at once, easily, his old avocations. He had always been a secluded man, living chiefly in books and in the past ; but this year he seemed less than ever inclined to knock at the hospitable doors which were open to him. For in spite of his reserve, his diffidence, Campion's success might have been social, had he cared for it, and not purely academic. His had come to be a name in letters, in the higher paths of criticism ; and he had made no enemies. To his success indeed, gradual and quiet as this was, he had never grown quite accustomed, contrasting the little he had actually achieved with all that he had desired to do. His original work was of the slightest, and a book that was in his head he had never found time to write. His name was known in other ways, as a man of ripe knowledge, of impeccable taste ; as a born editor of choice reprints, of inaccessible classics : above all, as an authority—the greatest, upon the literature and the life (its flavour at once courtly, and mystical, had to him an unique charm) of the seventeenth century. His heart was in that age, and from much lingering over it, he had come to view modern life with a curious detachment, a sense of remote hostility : Democracy, the Salvation Army, the novels of M. Zola—he disliked them all impartially. A Catholic by long inheritance, he held his religion for something more than an heirloom ;

heirloom ; he exhaled it, like an intimate quality ; his mind being essentially of that kind to which a mystical view of things comes easiest.

This year passed with him much as any other of the last ten years had passed ; at least the routine of his daily existence admitted little outward change. And yet inwardly, he was conscious of alteration, of a certain quiet illumination which was a new thing to him.

Although at Ploumariel when the prospect of such a marriage had dawned on him, his first impression had been one of strangeness, he could reflect now that it was some such possibility as this which he had always kept vaguely in view. He had prided himself upon few things more than his patience ; and now it appeared that this was to be rewarded ; he was glad that he had known how to wait. This girl, Marie-Ursule, had an immense personal charm for him, but, beyond that, she was representative—her traditions were exactly those which the ideal girl of Campion's imagination would possess. She was not only personally adorable; she was also generically of the type which he admired. It was possibly because this type was, after all, so rare, that looking back, Campion in his middle age, could drag out of the recesses of his memory no spectre to compete with her. She was his first love precisely because the conditions, so choice and admirable, which rendered it inevitable for him to love her, had never occurred before. And he could watch the time of his probation gliding away with a pleased expectancy which contained no alloy of impatience. An illumination—a quite tranquil illumination : yes, it was under some such figure, without heart-burning, or adolescent fever, that love as it came to Campion was best expressed. Yet if this love was lucent rather than turbulent, that it was also deep he could remind himself, when a letter from the priest, while the spring was yet young, had sent him to Brittany, a month

or

or two before his accustomed time, with an anxiety that was not solely due to bewilderment.

"*Our child is well, mon bon,*" so he wrote. "*Do not alarm yourself. But it will be good for you to come, if it be only because of an idea she has, that you may remove. An idea! Call it rather a fancy—at least your coming will dispel it. Petites entêtées: I have no patience with these mystical little girls.*"

His musings on the phrase, with its interpretation varying to his mood, lengthened his long sea-passage, and the interminable leagues of railway which separated him from Pontivy, whence he had still some twenty miles to travel by the *Courrier*, before he reached his destination. But at Pontivy, the round, ruddy face of M. Letêtre greeting him on the platform dispelled any serious misgiving. Outside the post-office the familiar conveyance awaited them: its yellow inscription "Pontivy-Ploumariel," touched Campion electrically, as did the cheery greeting of the driver, which was that of an old friend. They shared the interior of the rusty trap—a fossil among vehicles—they chanced to be the only travellers, and to the accompaniment of jingling harness, and the clattering hoofs of the brisk little Carhaix horses, M. Letêtre explained himself.

"A vocation, *mon Dieu!* if all the little girls who fancied themselves with one, were to have their way, to whom would our poor France look for children? They are good women, *nos Ursulines*, ah, yes; but our Marie-Ursule is a good child, and blessed matrimony also is a sacrament. You shall talk to her, my Campion. It is a little fancy, you see, such as will come to young girls; a convent ague, but when she sees you" . . . He took snuff with emphasis, and flipped his broad fingers suggestively. "*Craque!* it is a betrothal, and a *trousseau*, and not the habit of religion, that Mademoiselle is full of. You will talk to her?"

Campion

Campion assented silently, absently, his eyes had wandered away, and looked through the little square of window at the sad-coloured Breton country, at the rows of tall poplars, which guarded the miles of dusty road like sombre sentinels. And the priest with a reassured air pulled out his breviary, and began to say his office in an imperceptible undertone. After a while he crossed himself, shut the book, and pillowing his head against the hot, shiny leather of the carriage, sought repose; very soon his regular, stertorous breathing, assured his companion that he was asleep. Campion closed his eyes also, not indeed in search of slumber, though he was travel weary; rather the better to isolate himself with the perplexity of his own thoughts. An indefinable sadness invaded him, and he could envy the priest's simple logic, which gave such short shrift to obstacles that Campion, with his subtle melancholy, which made life to him almost morbidly an affair of fine shades and nice distinctions, might easily exaggerate.

Of the two, perhaps the priest had really the more secular mind, as it certainly excelled Campion's in that practical wisdom, or common sense, which may be of more avail than subtlety in the mere economy of life. And what to the Curé was a simple matter enough, the removal of the idle fancy of a girl, might be to Campion, in his scrupulous temper, and his overweening tenderness towards just those pieties and renunciations which such a fancy implied, a task to be undertaken hardly with relish, perhaps without any real conviction, deeply as his personal wishes might be implicated in success. And the heart had gone out of his journey long before a turn of the road brought them in sight of Ploumariel.

IV

Up by the great, stone Calvary, where they had climbed nearly a year before, Campion stood, his face deliberately averted, while the young girl uttered her hesitating confidences; hesitating, yet candid, with a candour which seemed to separate him from the child by more than a measurable space of years, to set him with an appealing trustfulness in the seat of judgment—for him, for her. They had wandered there insensibly, through apple-orchards white with the promise of a bountiful harvest, and up the pine-clad hill, talking of little things—trifles to beguile their way—perhaps, in a sort of vain procrastination. Once, Marie-Ursule had plucked a branch of the snowy blossom, and he had playfully chided her that the cider would be less by a *litre* that year in Brittany. "But the blossom is so much prettier," she protested; "and there will be apples and apples—always enough apples. But I like the blossom best—and it is so soon over."

And then, emerging clear of the trees, with Ploumariel lying in its quietude in the serene sunshine below them, a sudden strenuousness had supervened, and the girl had unburdened herself, speaking tremulously, quickly, in an undertone almost passionate; and Campion, perforce, had listened. . . . A fancy? a whim? Yes, he reflected; to the normal, entirely healthy mind, any choice of exceptional conditions, any special self-consecration or withdrawal from the common lot of men and women must draw down upon it some such reproach, seeming the mere pedantry of inexperience. Yet, against his reason, and what he would fain call his better judgment, something in his heart of hearts stirred sympathetically with this notion of the girl. And it was no fixed resolution, no deliberate

deliberate justification which she pleaded. She was soft, and pliable, and even her plea for renunciation contained pretty, feminine inconsequences; and it touched Campion strangely. Argument he could have met with argument; an ardent conviction he might have assailed with pleading; but that note of appeal in her pathetic young voice, for advice, for sympathy, disarmed him.

"Yet the world," he protested at last, but half-heartedly, with a sense of self-imposture: "the world, Marie-Ursule, it has its disappointments; but there are compensations."

"I am afraid, afraid," she murmured.

Their eyes alike sought instinctively the Convent of the Ursulines, white and sequestered in the valley—a visible symbol of security, of peace, perhaps of happiness.

"Even there they have their bad days: do not doubt it."

"But nothing happens," she said simply; "one day is like another. They can never be very sad, you know."

They were silent for a time: the girl, shading her eyes with one small white hand, continued to regard the convent; and Campion considered her fondly.

"What can I say?" he exclaimed at last. "What would you put on me? Your uncle—he is a priest—surely the most natural adviser—you know his wishes."

She shook her head. "With him it is different—I am one of his family—he is not a priest for me. And he considers me a little girl—and yet I am old enough to marry. Many young girls have had a vocation before my age. Ah, help me, decide for me!" she pleaded; "you are my *tuteur*."

"And a very old friend, Marie-Ursule." He smiled rather sadly. Last year seemed so long ago, and the word, which he had almost spoken then, was no longer seasonable. A note in his voice,

voice, inexplicable, might have touched her. She took his hand impulsively, but he withdrew it quickly, as though her touch had scalded him.

"You look very tired; you are not used to our Breton rambles in this sun. See, I will run down to the cottage by the chapel and fetch you some milk. Then you shall tell me."

When he was alone the smile faded from his face and was succeeded by a look of lassitude, as he sat himself beneath the shadow of the Calvary to wrestle with his responsibility. Perhaps it was a vocation: the phrase, sounding strangely on modern ears, to him, at least, was no anachronism. Women of his race, from generation to generation, had heard some such voice and had obeyed it. That it went unheeded now was, perhaps, less a proof that it was silent, than that people had grown hard and deaf, in a world that had deteriorated. Certainly the convent had to him no vulgar, Protestant significance, to be combated for its intrinsic barbarism; it suggested nothing cold nor narrow nor mean, was veritably a gracious choice, a generous effort after perfection. Then it was for his own sake, on an egoistic impulse, that he should dissuade her? And it rested with him; he had no doubt that he could mould her, even yet, to his purpose. The child! how he loved her. . . . But would it ever be quite the same with them after that morning? Or must there be henceforth a shadow between them; the knowledge of something missed, of the lower end pursued, the higher slighted? Yet, if she loved him? He let his head drop on his hands, murmured aloud at the hard chance which made him at once judge and advocate in his own cause. He was not conscious of praying, but his mind fell into that condition of aching blankness which is, perhaps, an extreme prayer. Presently he looked down again at Ploumariel, with its coronal of faint smoke ascending in the perfectly

perfectly still air, at the white convent of the Dames Ursulines, which seemed to dominate and protect it. How peaceful it was! And his thought wandered to London: to its bustle and noise, its squalid streets, to his life there, to its literary coteries, its politics, its society; vulgar and trivial and sordid they all seemed from this point of vantage. That was the world he had pleaded for, and it was into that he would bring the child. . . . And suddenly, with a strange reaction, he was seized with a sense of the wisdom of her choice, its pictorial fitness, its benefit for both of them. He felt at once and finally, that he acquiesced in it; that any other ending to his love had been an impossible grossness, and that to lose her in just that fashion was the only way in which he could keep her always. And his acquiescence was without bitterness, and attended only by that indefinable sadness which to a man of his temper was but the last refinement of pleasure. He had renounced, but he had triumphed; for it seemed to him that his renunciation would be an ægis to him always against the sordid facts of life, a protest against the vulgarity of instinct, the tyranny of institutions. And he thought of the girl's life, as it should be, with a tender appreciation—as of something precious laid away in lavender. He looked up to find her waiting before him with a basin half full of milk, warm still, fresh from the cow; and she watched him in silence while he drank. Then their eyes met, and she gave a little cry.

"You will help me? Ah, I see that you will! And you think I am right?"

"I think you are right, Marie-Ursule."

"And you will persuade my uncle?"

"I will persuade him."

She took his hand in silence, and they stood so for a minute, gravely regarding each other. Then they prepared to descend.

To Salomé at St. James's

By Theodore Wratislaw

FLOWER of the ballet's nightly mirth,
Pleased with a trinket or a gown,
Eternal as eternal earth
You dance the centuries down.

For you, my plaything, slight and light,
Capricious, petulant and proud,
With whom I sit and sup to-night
Among the tawdry crowd,

Are she whose swift and sandalled feet
And postured girlish beauty won
A pagan prize, for you unmeet,
The head of Baptist John.

And after ages, when you sit
A princess less in birth than power,
Freed from the theatre's fume and heat
To kill an idle hour,

Here

Here in the babbling room agleam
With scarlet lips and naked arms
And such rich jewels as beseem
The painted damzel's charms,

Even now your tired and subtle face
Bears record to the wondrous time
When from your limbs' lascivious grace
Sprang forth your splendid crime.

And though none deem it true, of those
Who watch you in our banal age
Like some stray fairy glide and pose
Upon a London stage,

Yet I to whom your frail caprice
Turns for the moment ardent eyes
Have seen the strength of love release
Your sleeping memories.

I too am servant to your glance,
I too am bent beneath your sway,
My wonder! My desire! who dance
Men's heads and hearts away.

Sweet arbitress of love and death,
Unchanging on time's changing sands,
You hold more lightly than a breath
The world between your hands!

Second Thoughts

By Arthur Moore

I

As the clock struck eight Sir Geoffrey Vincent cast aside the dull society journal with which he had been beguiling the solitude of his after-dinner coffee and cigar, and abandoned, with an alacrity eloquent of long boredom, his possession of one of the capacious chairs which invited repose in the dingy smoking-room of an old-fashioned club. It had been reserved for him, after twenty monotonous years of almost unbroken exile, spent, for the most part, amid the jungles and swamps of Lower Burma, to realise that a friendless man, alone in the most populous city of the world, may encounter among thousands of his peers a desolation more supreme than the solitude of the most ultimate wilderness; and he found himself wondering, a little savagely, why, after all, he had expected his home-coming to be so different from the reality that now confronted him. When he landed at Brindisi, a short ten days ago, misgivings had already assailed him vaguely; the fact that he was practically homeless, that, although not altogether bereft of kith and kin, he had no family circle to welcome him as an addition to its circumference, had made it inevitable that his rapid passage across the Continent should be haunted

haunted by forebodings to which he had not cared to assign a shape too definite; phantoms which he exorcised hopefully, with a tacit reliance on a trick of falling on his feet which had seldom failed his need. He consoled himself with the thought that London was home, England was home; he would meet old comrades in the streets perhaps, assuredly at his club, and such encounters would be so much the more delightful if they were fortuitous, unexpected. The plans which he had laid so carefully pacing the long deck of the P. and O. boat in the starlight, or, more remotely, lying awake through the hot night hours under a whining punkah in his lonely bungalow, had all implied, however vaguely and impersonally, a certain companionship. He was dimly conscious that he had cousins somewhere in the background; he had long since lost touch with them, but he would look them up. He had two nieces, still in their teens, the children of his only sister who had died ten years ago; he had never seen them, but their photographs were charming—they should be overwhelmed with such benefactions as a bachelor uncle with a well-lined purse may pleasantly bestow. His friends—the dim legion that was to rise about his path—should take him to see Sarah Bernhardt (a mere name to him as yet) at the Gaiety, to the new Gilbert and Sullivan opera at the Savoy; they should enlighten him as to the latent merits of the pictures at Burlington House; they should dine with him, shoot with him, be introduced to his Indian falcons; in a word, he would keep open house, in town and country too, for all good fellows and their pretty wives. It had even occurred to him, as a possibility neither remote nor unattractive, that he might himself one day possess a pretty wife to welcome them.

His sanguine expectations encountered their first rebuff when he found the Piccadilly Club, which had figured so often in the dreams

dreams of its exiled member, abandoned to a horde of workmen, a mere wilderness of paint and whitewash; and it was with a touch of resentment that he accepted the direction of an indifferent hall-porter to an unfamiliar edifice in Pall Mall as its temporary substitute. Entering the smoking-room, a little diffidently, on the evening of his arrival in London, he found himself eyed, at first with faint curiosity, by two or three of the men upon whom his gaze rested expectantly, but in no case was this curiosity—prompted doubtless by that touch of the exotic which sometimes clings to dwellers in the East—the precursor of the kindly recognition, the surprised, incredulous greeting which he had hoped for. After a few days he was simply ignored; his face, rather stern, with its distinctive Indian tan through which the grey eyes looked almost blue, his erect figure, and dark hair sparsely flecked with a frosty white, had become familiar; he had visited his tailor, and his garments no longer betrayed him to the curious by their fashion of Rangoon.

The Blue-book, which he had been quick to interrogate, informed him that his old friend Hibbert lived in Portman Square, and that the old lady who was the guardian of his nieces had a house at Hampstead: further inquiry at the addresses thus obtained left him baffled by the intelligence that Colonel Hibbert was in Norway, his nieces at school in Switzerland. Mackinnon, late of the Woods and Forests, whom he met at Burlington House, raised his hopes for an instant by a greeting which sounded precisely the note of cordiality that he yearned for, only to dash them by expressing a hope that he should see more of his old friend in the autumn; he was off to Southampton to join a friend's yacht on the morrow, and after his cruise he had designs on Scotland and the grouse.

Sir Geoffrey, chained to the neighbourhood of London by legal business

business, already too long deferred, connected with the succession which had made him a rich man and brought him home, could only rebel mutely against the ill-fortune which left him solitary at a time when he most longed for fellowship, acknowledging the while, with a touch of self-reproach, that the position which he resented was very largely due to his own shortcomings: he had always figured as a lamentably bad correspondent, and his inveterate aversion to letter-writing had allowed the links of many old friendships to fall asunder, had operated to leave such friends as were still in touch with him in ignorance of his home-coming.

Now, as he paused in the hall of his club to light a cigarette before passing out into the pleasant July twilight, he told himself that for the present he had done with London; he would shake the dust of the inhospitable city from off his feet, and go down to the place in Wiltshire which was learning to call him master, to await better days in company with his beloved falcons. He even found himself taking comfort from this prospect while a hansom bore him swiftly to the Savoy Theatre, and when he was safely ensconced in his stall he beguiled the interval before the rising of the curtain—a period which his impatience to escape from the club rather than any undue passion for punctuality had made somewhat lengthy—by considering, speculatively, the chances of society which the Willescombe neighbourhood seemed to afford. He enjoyed the first act of the extravaganza with the zest of a man to whom the work of the famous collaborators was an entire novelty, his pleasure unalloyed by the fact, of which he was blissfully unconscious, that one of the principal parts was played by an understudy. His *ennui* returning with the fall of the curtain, he prepared to spend the entr'acte in contemplation of the people who composed the house, rather than to incur the resentment of the placid dowagers who were his neighbours, by passing and repassing, like the

the majority of his fellow-men, in search of the distant haven where cigarettes and drinks, obtained with difficulty, could be hastily appreciated. More than once his wandering eyes returned to a box next the stage on a dress-circle tier, and finally they rested rather wistfully on its occupants, or, to be more accurate, on the younger of the two ladies who were seated in front. It was not simply because the girl was pretty, though her beauty, the flower-like charm of a young Englishwoman fresh from the schoolroom, a fine example of a type not particularly rare, would have furnished a sufficient pretext: he was struck by a resemblance, a haunting reminiscence, which at first exercised his curiosity, and ended by baffling and tantalising him. There was something vaguely familiar, he thought, in the manner of her smile, the inclination of her head as she turned now and then to address a remark to her companion, the lady in grey, whose face was hidden from him by the drapery at the side of the box. When she laughed, furling a feathery fan, and throwing a bright glance back at the gentleman whose white shirt-front was dimly visible in the background, Sir Geoffrey felt himself on the verge of solving his riddle, but at this point, while a name seemed to tremble on his lips, the lights of the auditorium were lowered, and the rising of the curtain on the fairyland of the second scene diverted his attention to the stage. Later, when he had passed into the crowded lobby, and was making his way slowly through a jungle of pretty dresses towards the door, he recognised in front of him the amber-coloured hair and dainty, pale-blue opera cloak of the damsel who had puzzled him. The two ladies (her companion of the grey dress was close at hand) halted near the door while their cavalier passed out in search of their carriage; the elder lady turned, adjusting a cloud of soft lace about her shoulders, and Sir Geoffrey was struck on the instant by a swift thrill. Here, at last, was an old friend—that face could belong

belong to no one else than Margaret Addison. It was natural that her maiden name should first occur to him, but he remembered, as he edged his way laboriously towards her, that she had married just after he sailed for Burma ; yes, she had married that amiable scapegrace Dick Vandeleur, who had met his death in the hunting-field nearly fifteen years ago.

As he drew near, Mrs. Vandeleur's gaze fell upon him for a brief instant ; he thought that she had not recognised him, but before his spirits had time to suffer any consequent depression, her eyes returned to him, and as he smiled in answer to the surprise which he read in them, he saw her face flush, and then grow a little pale, before a responsive light of recognition dawned upon it. She took his hand silently when he offered it, eyeing him with the same faint smile, an expression in which welcome seemed to be gleaming through a cloud of apprehension.

"I'm not a ghost," he said, laughing ; "I'm Geoffrey Vincent. Don't be ashamed of owning that you had quite forgotten me ! "

"I knew you at once," she said simply. "So you are home at last : you must come and see me as soon as you can. This is my daughter Dorothy, and here is my brother—of course you remember Philip ?—coming to tell us that the carriage is waiting. You will come, to-morrow—to prove that you are not a ghost ? We shall expect you."

II

A fortnight later Sir Geoffrey was sitting in a punt, beguiling the afternoon of a rainy day by luring unwary roach to their destruction with a hair-line and pellets of paste, delicately kneaded by the taper fingers of Miss Dorothy Vandeleur. He was the guest

guest of Mrs. Vandeleur's brother, his school friend, Philip Addison the Q.C., and Mrs. Vandeleur and her daughter were also staying at the delighful old Elizabethan house which nestled, with such an air of immemorial occupation, halfway down the wooded side of one of the Streatley hills, its spotless lawn sloping steeply to the margin of the fairest river in the world. Miss Vandeleur had enshrined herself among a pile of rugs and cushions at the stern of the punt, where the roof of her uncle's boat-house afforded shelter from the persistent rain. She was arrayed in the blue serge dear to the modern water-nymph ; and at intervals she relieved her feelings by shaking a small fist at the leaden vault of sky. For the rest, her attention was divided impartially between her novel, with which she did not seem to make much progress, her fox-terrier Sancho, and the slowly decreasing lump of paste, artfully compounded with cotton-wool for consistency, with which, as occasion arose, she ministered to her companion's predatory needs. The capture of a fish was followed inevitably by a disarrangement of her nest of cushions, and a pathetic petition for its instant release and restoration to the element from which it had been untimely inveigled. Occasionally, the rain varied the monotony of the dolorous drizzle by a vehement and spirited downpour, lasting for some minutes, prompting one of the occupants of the punt to remark, with misplaced confidence, that it must clear up soon, after that. Then Sir Geoffrey would abandon his rod, and beat a retreat to the stern of the punt ; and during these interludes, much desultory conversation ensued. Once, Miss Vandeleur startled her companion by asking, suddenly, how it was that he seemed so absurdly young ?

"I hope I am not rude ?" she added, "but really you do strike me as almost the youngest person I know. You are much younger than Jack—Mr. Wilgress—for instance, and it's only about three years since he left Eton."

Sir

Sir Geoffrey smiled, wondering a little whether the girl was laughing at him ; for though a man of forty-seven, who has for twenty years successfully resisted a trying climate, may consider himself as very far from the burden of old age, it was conceivable that the views of a maiden in her teens might be very different.

"It's because I am having such a good time," he hazarded. "You and your mother are responsible, you know ; before I met you at the Savoy, on that memorable evening, I was feeling as blue as—as the sky ought to be if it had any decency, and at least as old as the river. I suppose it's true that youth and good spirits are contagious."

Dorothy gazed at him for a moment reflectively. "How lucky it was that Uncle Philip took us to the theatre on that evening ! It was just a chance. And we might never have met you."

"It was lucky for me !" declared the other simply. "But would you have cared ? "

"Of course !" said the girl promptly, but lowering her blue eyes. "You see, I have never known a real live hero before. Do tell me about your fight in the hill-fort, or how you caught the Dacoits ! Uncle Philip says that you ought to have had the V.C."

Sir Geoffrey replied by a little disparaging murmur. "Oh, it was quite a commonplace affair—all in the day's work. Any one else would have done the same."

Dorothy settled herself back among her cushions resentfully, clasping her hands, rather sunburned, across her knees.

"I should like to see them !" she declared contemptuously. "That's just what that Jack Wilgress said—at least he implied it. It is true, he apologised afterwards. How I despise Oxford boys ! "

"I thought he was a very good fellow," said Sir Geoffrey, diplomatically

diplomatically turning the subject from his own achievements. "I suppose it might improve him to have something to do; but he strikes me as a very good specimen of the ornamental young man."

"Ornamental!" echoed Dorothy sarcastically. "It would do him good to have to work for his living."

"Poor beggar, he couldn't help being born with a silver spoon in his mouth—it isn't his fault."

"Spoon!" exclaimed Miss Vandeleur. "A whole dinner service I should think. A soup-ladle at the very least. It's quite big enough: perhaps that accounts for it!"

The girl laughed, swaying back, with the grace of her years, against her cushions; then, observing that her companion's grave grey eyes were fixed upon her, she grew suddenly demure, sighing with a little air of penitence.

"I am very wicked to-day," she confessed. "It's the rain, I suppose, and want of exercise. Do you ever feel like that, Sir Geoffrey? Do you ever get into an omnibus and simply loathe and detest every single person in it? Do you long to swear—real swears, like our army in Flanders—at everybody you meet, just because it's rainy or foggy, and because they are all so ugly and horrid? I do, frequently."

"I know, I know," said the other sympathetically, while he reeled in his line and deftly untied the tiny hook. "Only, the omnibus has not figured very often in my case; it has generally been a hot court-house, or a dusty dâk-bungalow full of commercial travellers. But I don't feel like that now, at all. I hope I am not responsible for your frame of mind?"

"Oh," protested Dorothy, "don't make me feel such an abandoned wretch! I should have been much worse if you had not been here. I should have quarrelled with Uncle Phil, or been

been rude to my mother, or something dreadful. I'm perfectly horrid to her sometimes. And as it is, I have let her go up to town all alone—to see my dressmaker."

Sir Geoffrey stood up and began to take his rod to pieces. "And are you quite sure that you haven't been 'loathing and detesting' me all the afternoon?"

Dorothy picked up her novel and smoothed its leaves reflectively. "I—— But no. I won't make you too conceited. Look, the sun is actually coming out! Don't you think we might take the Canadian up to the weir? You really ought to be introduced to the big chub under the bridge."

The rain had almost ceased, and when they had transferred themselves into the dainty canoe, a few strokes of the paddle which Miss Vandeleur wielded with such effective grace swept them out into a full flood of delicate evening sunlight. The sky smiled blue through rapidly increasing breaks in the clouds; the sunbeams, slanting from the west, touched with pale gold the quivering trees, which seemed to lift their wet branches and spread their leaves to court the warm caress. A new radiance of colour crept into the landscape, as if it had been a picture from which a smoky glass was withdrawn; the water grew very still—this too was in the manner of a picture—with the peace of a summer evening, brimming with an unbroken surface luminously from bank to bank. Strange guttural cries of water-birds sounded from the reed-beds; from the next reach came the rhythmic pulse of oars, faint splashes, and the brisk rattle of row-locks; voices and laughter floated down from the lock, travelling far beyond belief in the hushed stillness of the evening. The wake of the light canoe trailed unbroken to the shadows of the boathouse, and the wet paddle gleamed as it slid through the water. Presently Dorothy stayed her hand.

"What

"What an enchanting world it is!" she murmured, with wide eyes full of the glamour of the setting sun. "Beautiful, beautiful——! How soon one forgets the fogs, and rain, and cold! I feel as if I had lived in this fairyland always."

Her lips trembled a little as she spoke, and Sir Geoffrey found something in the pathos of her youth which held him silent. When they broke the spell of silence, their words were trivial, perhaps, but the language was that of old friends, simple and direct. Sir Geoffrey at least, for whom the charm of the occasion was a gift so rare that he scarcely dared to desecrate it by mental criticism, was far from welcoming the interruption which presently occurred, in the shape of a youth, arrayed in immaculate flannels and the colours of a popular rowing club, who hailed them cheerfully from a light skiff, resting on his sculls and drifting alongside while he rolled a cigarette.

III

Dorothy sank down, rather wearily, in the low basket-chair which stood near the open window of her mother's bedroom—a tall French window, with a wide balcony overrun by climbing roses, and a view of the river, and waited for Mrs. Vandeleur to dismiss her maid. As she lay there, adjusting absently the loose tresses of her hair, she could feel the breath of the faint breeze as it wandered, gathering a light burden of fragrance, through the dusky roses; she could see the river, dimly, where the moonbeams touched its ripples, and once or twice the sound of voices reached her from the distant smoking-room. The closing of the door as the maid went out disturbed her reverie, and turning a little in her chair she found her mother regarding her thoughtfully.

"No,"

"No," said Dorothy, swiftly interpreting her mother's glance. "You mustn't send me away, my pretty little mother. I'll promise not to catch cold. I haven't been able to talk to you all day."

Mrs. Vandeleur half closed the window, and then seated herself with an expression of resignation on the arm of her daughter's chair. In the dim light shed by the two candles on the dressing-table, one would have thought them two sisters, plotting innocently the discomfiture of man. The occasion did not prove so stimulating to conversation as might have been expected. For a few minutes both were silent; Dorothy began to hum an air from the Savoy opera, rather recklessly; she kicked off one of her slippers, and it fell on the polished oak floor with a little clatter.

"Little donkey!" murmured her mother sweetly. "So much for your talking. I'm going to bed at once." Then she added, carelessly, "Did you see Jack to-day?"

The humming paused abruptly; then it went on for a second, and paused again.

"Oh yes, the inevitable Mr. Wilgress was on the river, as usual. He nearly ran us down in that idiotic skiff of his."

Mrs. Vandeleur raised her eyebrows, gazing at her unconscious daughter reflectively.

"You didn't see him alone, then?" she inquired presently.

"Who? Mr. Wilgress? Ye-es, I think so. When we got back to the boathouse he insisted on taking me out again in the canoe, to show me the correct Indian stroke. Much he knows about it! That's why I was so late for dinner. Oh, please don't talk about Mr. Wilgress."

"Mr. Wilgress again?" murmured Mrs. Vandeleur. "I thought it always used to be 'Jack.'"

"Only, only by accident," said the girl weakly. "And when he wasn't there."

"Well,

"Well, he isn't here now. At least I hope not. You—you haven't quarrelled, have you Dolly?"

"No—yes. I don't know. He—he asked me—oh, he was ridiculous. How I hate boys—and jealousy."

Mrs. Vandeleur shivered, then rose abruptly and closed the window against which she leaned, gazing down at the formless mass of the shrubs which cowered over their shadows on the lawn. Her mind, vaguely troubled for some days past, and now keenly on the alert, travelled swiftly back, bridging a space of nearly twenty years, to a scene strangely like this, in which she and her mother had held the stage. She too, a girl then of Dorothy's eighteen years, had brought the halting story of her doubts and scruples to her natural counsellor: she could remember still how the instinct of reticence had struggled with the yearning for sympathy, for the comfort of the confessional. She could recall now and appreciate her mother's tact and patient questioning, her own perversity, the dumbness which seemed independent of her own volition. A commonplace page of life. Two men at her feet, and the girl unskilled to read her heart: one had spoken—that was Dick Vandeleur, careless, brilliant, the heir to half a county; the other—her old friend; she could not bear to think of him now. Knowledge had come too late, and the light which made her wonder scornfully at her blindness. And her mother—she of course had played the worldly part; but her counsel had been honest, without bias: it were cruel to blame her now. Loyal though she was, Margaret Vandeleur had asked herself an hundred times, yielding to that love of threading a labyrinth which rules most women, what would have been the story of her life if she had steeled herself to stand or fall by her own judgment, if she had refused to allow her mother to drop into the wavering scale the words which had turned it, ever so slightly, in favour of the richer

richer man, the man whom she had married, whose name she bore.

It seemed plain enough, to a woman's keen vision—what sense so subtle, yet so easily beguiled—that Dorothy's choice was embarrassed, just as her own had been. The girl and her two admirers—how the old story repeated itself!—one, Jack Wilgress, the good-natured, good-looking idler, whose devotion to the river threatened to make him amphibious, and whose passion for scribbling verse bade fair to launch him adrift among the cockle-shell fleet of Minor Poets; the other—Geoffrey Vincent! To call upon Margaret Vandeleur to guide her daughter's choice between two men of whom Geoffrey Vincent was one—surely here was the end and crown of Fate's relentless irony. She felt herself blushing as she pressed her forehead against the cool window-pane, put to shame by the thoughts which the comparison suggested, which would not be stifled. Right or wrong, at least her mother had been impartial: there was a sting in this, a failure of her precedent. She sighed, concluding mutely that silence was her only course; even if she would, she could not follow in her mother's footsteps—the girl must abide by her own judgment.

When she turned, smiling faintly, the light of the flickering candles fell upon her face, betraying a pallor which startled Dorothy from her reverie. She sprang from her chair, reproaching her selfishness.

"You poor, tired, little mother," she murmured penitently, with a hasty kiss. "How could I be so cruel as to keep you up after your journey! I'm a wretch, but I'm really going now. Good-night."

"Good-night," said her mother, caressing the vagrant coils of the girl's amber-coloured hair. "Don't worry yourself; everything will come right if—if you listen to your own heart."

Dorothy's

Dorothy's answer was precluded by another kiss. "It's so full of you that it can't be bothered to think of any one else," she declared plaintively, as she turned towards the door. Then she paused, fingering nervously a little heap of books which lay upon a table. "He—he isn't so very old, you know," she murmured softly before she made her escape.

When she was alone Mrs. Vandeleur sank into the chair which her daughter had just quitted, nestling among the cushions and knitting her brows in thought. The clock on the mantelpiece had struck twelve before she rose, and then she paused for an instant in front of the looking-glass, gazing into it half timidly before she extinguished the candles. The face which she saw there was manifestly pretty, in spite of the trouble which lurked in the tired eyes, and when she turned away, a hovering smile was struggling with the depression at the corners of the delicate, mobile lips.

IV

When Sir Geoffrey returned to Riverside, three days later, after a brief sojourn in London, spent for the most part at the office of his solicitor in Lincoln's Inn, he found Mrs. Vandeleur presiding over a solitary tea-table in a shady corner of the garden. A few chairs sociably disposed under the gnarled walnut-tree, and a corresponding number of empty tea-cups, suggested that her solitude had not been of long duration, and this impression was confirmed when Mrs. Vandeleur told her guest that if he had presented himself a short quarter of an hour earlier he would have been welcomed in a manner more worthy of his deserts.

Sir Geoffrey drew one of the low basket chairs up to the table, protesting,

protesting, as he accepted a cup of tea, that he could not have wished for better fortune.

"This is very delightful," he declared. "I don't regret the tardiness of my train in the least. The other charming people are on the river, I suppose?"

Mrs. Vandeleur nodded. "Yes, the Patersons have just taken up their quarters in that house-boat, which you must have noticed, near the lock, and my brother and Dorothy have gone with Jack Wilgress and his sisters to call upon them. You ought to have seen Daisy Wilgress; she is very pretty."

Sir Geoffrey smiled gravely, sipping his tea.

"If she is prettier than your daughter, Miss Wilgress must be very dangerous. But I must see her with my own eyes before I believe that."

"Oh, she is!" declared Mrs. Vandeleur, laughing lightly, but throwing a quick glance at him. "Ask Philip; he is more wrapped up in her than he has been in anything since his first brief."

"Poor Philip!" said the other quietly, stooping to pick a fallen leaf from the grass at his feet. "I—I have a fellow-feeling for him."

"You know you may smoke if you want to," interposed Mrs. Vandeleur, rather hurriedly. "And perhaps—if you really won't have any more tea—you might like to go in pursuit of the other people; I don't think they have taken all the boats. But I daresay you are tired? London is so fatiguing—and business."

Sir Geoffrey smiled, his white teeth showing pleasantly against the tan of his lean, good-humoured face.

"I *am* rather tired, I believe," he owned. "I have been spending a great deal of time in my solicitor's waiting-room, pretending to read *The Times*. And I have been thinking—that is always

always fatiguing. If I am not in your way, I should like to stay here."

Mrs. Vandeleur professed her satisfaction by a polite little murmur, leaning forward in her chair to marshal the scattered tea-cups on the tray, while Sir Geoffrey watched her askance, rather timidly, with a keen appreciation of the subtle charm of her personality ; her face, like a perfect cameo, or some rare pale flower, seeming to have gained rather in beauty by the deliberate passage from youth ; winning, just as some pictures do, an added grace of refinement, a delicacy, which the slight modification of contours served only to intensify.

"I told you just now that I had been thinking," he said presently, when she had resumed her task of embroidering initials in the corner of a handkerchief : "would it surprise you if I said that I had been thinking of you ? "

Mrs. Vandeleur raised her eyebrows slightly, her gaze still intent upon her patient needle.

"Perhaps it was natural that you should think of us," she hazarded.

"But I meant you," he continued ; "you, the Margaret of the old days, before I went away. For I used to call you 'Margaret' then. We were great friends, you know."

"I have always thought of you as a friend," she said simply. "Yes, we were great friends before—before you went away."

"It doesn't seem so long ago to me," he declared, almost plaintively, struck by something in the tone of her voice. Mrs. Vandeleur smiled tolerantly, scrutinising her embroidery, with her head poised on one side, a little after the manner of a bird.

"And now that I have found you again," he added with intention, dropping his eyes till they rested on the river, rippling past the

the wooden landing-stage below in the sunshine, "I—I don't want to lose you, Margaret!"

Mrs. Vandeleur met this declaration with a smile, which was courteous rather than cordial, merely acknowledging, as of right, the propriety of the aspiration, treating it as quite conventional. The simplicity of the gesture testified eloquently of the discipline of twenty years; only a woman would have detected the shadow of apprehension in her eyes, the trembling of the hands which seemed so placidly occupied. Her mind was already anxiously on the alert, racing rapidly over the now familiar ground which she had quartered of late so heedfully. For her, his words were ominous; it was of Dorothy surely that he wished to speak, and yet——! In the stress of expectation her thoughts took strange flights, following vague clues fantastically. The inveterate habit of retrospection carried her back, in spite of her scruples; her honest desire to think singly of Dorothy, regarding the fortune of her own life as irrevocably settled, impelled her irresistibly to call to the stage of her imagination a scene which she had often set upon it, a duologue, entirely fictive, which might, but for her perversity, have been enacted—twenty years ago.

Sir Geoffrey rose, and stood leaning with one hand on the back of his chair. This interruption—or perhaps it was the sound of oars and voices which floated in growing volume from the river—served to recall his companion to the present. The silence, of brief duration actually, seemed intolerable. She must break it, and when she spoke it was to name her daughter, aimlessly.

"Dorothy?" repeated Sir Geoffrey, as she paused. "She is extraordinarily like you were before I went away. Not that you are changed—it is delightful to come back and find you the same. It's only when she is with you that I can realise that there is a difference, a——"

"I was

"I was never so good as Dorothy," put in Mrs. Vandeleur quickly; "she will never have the same reason to blame herself—— I don't think you could imagine what she has been to me."

"I think I can," said Sir Geoffrey simply. Then he added, rather shyly: "Really, we seem to be very good friends already: it's very nice of her—it would be so natural for her to—to resent the intrusion of an old fellow like me."

"You need not be afraid of that; she looks upon you as—as a friend already."

"Thank you!" murmured the other. "And you think she might grow to—to like me, in time?"

Mrs. Vandeleur nodded mutely. Sir Geoffrey followed for a moment the deliberate entry and re-entry of her needle, reflectively; then, as his eyes wandered, he realised vaguely that a boat had reached the landing-stage, and that people were there: he recognised young Wilgress and Miss Vandeleur.

"You said just now that you always thought of me as a friend," he began. "I wonder—— Oh! it's no good," he added quickly, with a nervous movement of his hands, "I can't make pretty speeches! After all, it's simple; why should I play the coward? I can take 'no' for answer, if the worst comes to the worst, and—— Margaret, I know it's asking a great deal, but—I want you to marry me."

She cast a swift, startled glance at him, turning in her chair, and then dropped her eyes, asking herself bewilderedly whether this was still some fantasy. The words which he murmured now, pleading incoherently with her silence, confirmed the hopes which, in spite of her scrupulous devotion, refused to be gainsaid, thrusting themselves shamelessly into the foreground of her troubled thoughts. An inward voice, condemned by her wavering resolution as a whisper

whisper from the lips of treachery, suggested plausibly that after all Dorothy might have made a mistake; she repelled it fiercely, taking a savage pleasure in her pain, accusing herself, with vehement blame, as one who would fain stand in the way of her daughter's happiness. Even if she had deserved these fruits of late harvest which seemed to dangle within her grasp, even if her right to garner them had not been forfeited long ago by her folly of the past, how could she endure to figure as a rival, triumphing in her own daughter's discomfiture? Womanly pride and a thousand scruples barred the way.

"I love you," she heard him say again; "I believe I have always loved you since—— But you know how it was in the old days."

"Don't remind me of that!" she pleaded, almost fiercely; "I was—I can't bear to think of what I did! You ought not to forgive me; I don't deserve it."

"Forgive?" he echoed, blankly.

"Oh, you are generous—but it is impossible, impossible; it is all a mistake; let us forget it."

"I don't understand! Is it that—that you don't care for me?"

Margaret gave a despairing little sigh, dropping her hands on the sides of her chair.

"You don't know," she murmured. "It isn't right. No—oh, it must be No!"

Sir Geoffrey echoed her sigh. As he watched her silently, the instinct of long reticence making his forbearance natural, he saw a new expression dawn into her troubled face. Her eyes were fixed intently on the river; that they should be fixed was not strange, but there was a light of interest in them which induced Sir Geoffrey, half involuntarily, to bend his gaze in the same direction. He saw that Dorothy had now disembarked, and was standing,

standing, a solitary figure, close to the edge of the landing-stage. Something in her pose seemed to imply that she was talking, and just at this moment she moved to one side, revealing the head and shoulders of Jack Wilgress, which overtopped the river-bank in such a manner as to suggest that he was standing in the punt, of which the bamboo pole rose like a slender mast above his head. The group was certainly pictorial: the silhouette of Dorothy's pretty figure telling well against the silvery river, and the young man's pose, too, lending itself to an effective bit of composition; but Sir Geoffrey felt puzzled, and even a little hurt, by the interest that Margaret displayed at a moment which he at least had found sufficiently strenuous. He turned, stooping to pick up his hat; then he paused, and was about to speak, when Mrs. Vandeleur interrupted him, mutely, with a glance, followed swiftly by the return of her eyes to the river. Acquiescing patiently, Sir Geoffrey perceived that a change had occurred in the grouping of the two young people. Wilgress had drawn nearer to the girl; his figure stood higher against the watery background, apparently he had one foot on the step of the landing-stage. Dorothy extended a hand, which he clasped and held longer than one would have reckoned for in the ordinary farewell. The girl shook her head; another movement, and the punt began to glide reluctantly from the shore; then it turned slowly, swinging round and heading down-stream. Dorothy raised one hand to the bosom of her dress, and before she dropped it to her side threw something maladroitly towards her departing companion. Wilgress caught the flower—it was evidently a flower—making a dash which involved the loss of his punt-pole; a ripple of laughter, and Dorothy, unconscious of the four eyes which watched her from the shadows of the walnut tree, turned slowly, and began to climb the grassy slope.

Mrs. Vandeleur's

Mrs. Vandeleur's eyelids drooped, and her lips, which had been parted for an instant in a pensive smile, trembled a little; she sighed, tapping the ground lightly with her foot, then sank back in her chair and seemed lost in contemplation of the needlework that lay upon her lap. Sir Geoffrey began to move away, but turned suddenly, and stooping, took one of her hands reverently in his own, clasping it as it lay upon the arm of her chair.

"Margaret," he said, "forgive me; but must it be good-bye, after all these years, or is there a chance for me?"

Mrs. Vandeleur's reply was inaudible; but her hand, though it fluttered for a moment, was not withdrawn.

Twilight

By Olive Custance

> Mother of the dews, dark eyelashed Twilight!
> Low-lidded Twilight o'er the valley's brim.
> MEREDITH.

SPIRIT of Twilight, through your folded wings
I catch a glimpse of your averted face,
And rapturous on a sudden, my soul sings
"Is not this common earth a holy place?"

Spirit of Twilight, you are like a song
That sleeps, and waits a singer, like a hymn
That God finds lovely and keeps near Him long,
Till it is choired by aureoled cherubim.

Spirit of Twilight, in the golden gloom
Of dreamland dim I sought you, and I found
A woman sitting in a silent room
Full of white flowers that moved and made no sound.

These white flowers were the thoughts you bring
to all,
And the room's name is Mystery where you sit,
Woman whom we call Twilight, when night's pall
You lift across our Earth to cover it.

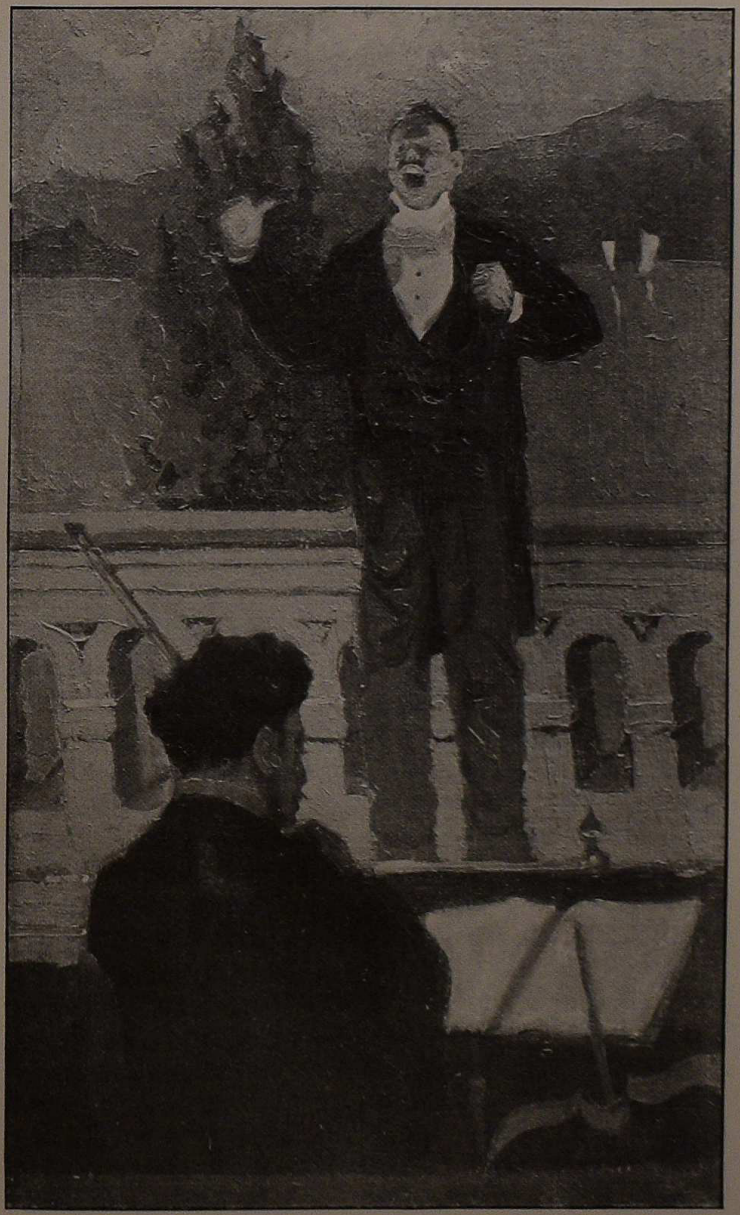
Three Pictures

By Walter Sickert

I. Collins's Music Hall, Islington

II. The Lion Comique

III. Charley's Aunt



Tobacco Clouds

By Lionel Johnson

Cloud upon cloud: and, if I were to think that an image of life can lie in wreathing, blue tobacco smoke, pleasant were the life so fancied. Its fair changes in air, its gentle motions, its quiet dying out and away at last, should symbolise something more than perfect idleness. Cloud upon cloud: and I will think, as I have said: it is amusing to think so.

It is that death, out and away upon the air, which charms me: charms more than the manner of the blown red rose, full of dew at morning, upon the grass at sunset. The clouds' end, their death in air, fills me with a very beauty of desire; it has no violence in it, and it is almost invisible. Think of it! While the cloud lived, it was seemly and various; and with a graceful change it passed away: the image of a reasonable life is there, hanging among tobacco clouds. An image and a test: an image, because elaborated by fancy: a true and appealing image, and so, to my present way of life, a test.

That way is, to walk about the old city, with "a spirit in my feet," as Shelley and Catullus have it, of joyous aims and energies; and to speed home to my solitary room over the steep High Street; in an arm-chair, to read Milton and Lucretius, with others. There is nothing unworthy in all this: there is open air,

an

an ancient city, a lonely chamber, perfect poets. Those should make up a passing life well: for death! I can watch tobacco clouds, exploring the secret of their beautiful conclusion. And, indeed, I think that already this life has something of their manner, those wheeling clouds! It has their light touch upon the world, and certainly their harmlessness. Early morning, when the dew sparkles red; honey, and coffee, and eggs for a breakfast; the quick, eager walk between the limes, through the Close of fine grass, to the river fields; then the blithe return to my poets; all that, together, comes to resemble the pleasant spheres of tobacco cloud; I mean, the circling hours, in their passage, and in their change, have something of a dreamy order and progression. Such little incidents! Now, grey air and whistling leaves: now, a marketing crowd of country folk round the Cross: and presently, clear candles; with Milton, in rich Baskervile type, or Lucretius, in the exquisite print of early Italy.

Such little incidents, in a world of battles and of plagues: of violent death by sea and land! Yet this quiet life, too, has difficulties and needs: its changes must be gone through with a ready pleasure and a mind unhesitating. For, trivial though they be in aspect and amount, yet the consecration of them, to be an holy discipline of experience, is so much the greater an attempt: it is an art. Each thing, be it man, or book, or place, should have its rights, when it encounters me: each has its proper quality, its peculiar spirit, not to be misinterpreted by me in carelessness, nor overlooked with impatience. That is clear: but neither must I vaunt my just view of common life. Meditation, at twilight, by the window looking toward the bare downs, is very different from that anxious examination of motives, dear to sedulous souls. My meditation is only still life: the clouds of smoke

smoke go up, grey and blue; the earlier stars come out, above the sunset and the melancholy downs; and deep, mournful bells ring slowly among the valley trees. Then, if my day have been successful, what peace follows, and how profound a charm! The little things of the day, sudden glances of light upon grey stone, pleasant snatches of organ music from the church, quaint rustic sights in some near village: they come back upon me, gentle touches of happiness, airs of repose. And when the mysteries come about me, the fearfulness of life, and the shadow of night; then, have I not still the blue, grey clouds, *occultis de rebus quo referam?* So I escape the tribulations of doubt, those gloomy tribulations: and I live in the strength of dreams, which never doubt.

Is it all a delusion? But that is a foolish wonder: nothing is a delusion, except the extremes of pleasure and of pain. Take what you will of the world; its crowds, or its calms: there is nothing altogether wrong to every one. Lucretius, upon his watch-tower, deny it as he may, found some exultation and delight in the lamentable prospect below: it filled him with a magnificent darkness of soul, a princely compassion at heart. And Milton, in his evil days, felt himself to be tragic and austere: he knew it, not as a proud boast, but as a proud fact. No! life is never wrong, altogether, to every one: you and I, he and she, priest and penitent, master and slave: one with another, we compose a very glory of existence before the unseen Powers. Therefore, I believe in my measured way of life; its careful felicities, fashioned out of little things: to you, the change of Ministries, and the accomplishment of conquests, bring their wealth of rich emotion: to me, who am apart from the louder concerns of life, the flowering of the limes, and the warm autumn rains, bring their pensive beauty and a store of memories.

Is

Is it I, am indolent? Is it you, are clamorous? Why should it be either? Let us say, I am the lover of quiet things, and you are enamoured of mighty events. Each, without undue absorption in his taste, relishes the savour of a different experience.

But I think, I am no egoist: no melancholy spectator of things, cultivating his intellect with old poetry, nourishing his senses upon rural nature. There are times, when the swarms of men press hard upon a solitary; he hears the noise of the streets, the heavy vans of merchandise, the cry of the railway whistle: and in a moment, his thoughts travel away, to London, to Liverpool; to great docks and to great ships; and away, till he is watching the dissimilar bustle of Eastern harbours, and hearing the discordant sounds of Chinese workmen. The blue smoke curls and glides away, with blue pagodas, and snowy almond bloom, and cherry flowers, circling and gleaming in it, like a narcotic vision. O magic of tobacco! Dreams are there, and superb images, and a somnolent paradise. Sometimes, the swarms of humanity press wearily and hardly; with a cruel insistence, crushing out my right to happiness. I think, rather I brood, upon the fingers that deftly rolled the cigarette, upon the people in tobacco plantations, upon all the various commerce involved in its history: how do they all fare, those many workers? Strolling up and down, devouring my books through their lettered backs; remembering the workers with leather, paper, ink, who toiled at them, they frighten me from the peace. What a full world it is! What endless activities there are! And, oh, Nicomachean Ethics! how much conscious pleasure is in them all! Things, mere tangible things, have a terrible power of education: of calling out from the mind innumerable thoughts and sympathies. Like childish catechisms and categories—*Whence have we sago?*—plain substances

substances introduce me to swarms of men, before unrealised. And they all lived and died, and cared for their children, or not, and led reasonable lives, or not: and, without any alternative, had casual thoughts and constant passions. Did each one of them ever stop in his work, and think that the world revolved about him alone; and all was his, and for him? Most men may have thought so, and shivered a little afterwards; and worked on steadily. Or did each one of them ever think that he was always beset with companions, hordes of men and women, necessary and inevitable? Then, he must have struggled a little in his mind, as a man fights for air, and worked on steadily. It does not do: this interrogation of mysteries, which are also facts. Nor am I called upon, from without or from within, to write an Essay upon the Problem of Economic Distribution. *Præsentia temnis!* Nature says to me: it is the stir of the world, and the great play of forces, that I am wailing, to no end. Let the great life continue, and the sun shine upon bright palaces; and geraniums, red geraniums, glow at the windows of dingy courts; death and sorrow come upon both, and upon me. And on all sides there is infinite tenderness; the invincible good-will, which says kind and cheerful things to every one sometimes, by a friend's mouth; the humane pieties of the world, which make glad the *Civitas Dei*, and make endurable the *Regnum Hominis*. I need not make myself miserable.

Full night at last; the dead of night, as dull folk have it; ignorant persons, who know nothing of nocturnal beauty, of night's lively magic. It was a good thought, to come out of my lonely room, to look at the cloisters by moonlight, and to wander round the Close, under the black shadows of the buttresses, while the moon is white upon their strange pinnacles. There is no noise, but only a silence, which seems very old; old, as the grey monuments

ments and the weathered arches. The wreathing, blue tobacco clouds look thin and pale, like breath upon a dark frosty night; they drift about these old precincts, with a kind of uncertainty and discomfort; one would think, they wanted a rich Mediterranean night, heavy odours of roses, and very fiery stars. Instead, they break upon mouldering traceries, and doleful cherubs of the last century; upon sunken headstones, and black oak doors with ironwork over them. Perhaps the cigarette is southern and Latin, southern and Oriental, after all; and I am a dreamer, out of place in this northern grey antiquity. If it be so, I can taste the subtle pleasures of contrast: and, dwelling upon the singular features of this old town, I can make myself a place in it, as its conscious critic and adopted alien. There is a curious apprehension of enjoyment, a genuine touch of luxury, in this nocturnal visit to these old northern things! I consider, with satisfaction, how the Stuart king, who spurned tobacco contumeliously, put a devoted faith in witches, those northern daughters of the devil; northern, and very different from the dames of Thessaly; from the crones of Propertius, and of Horace, and of Apuleius the Golden. Who knows, but I may hear strange voices in the near aisle before cockcrow? By night, night in the north, happen cold and dismal things; and then, what a night is this! Chilly stars, and wild, grey clouds, flying over a misty moon.

At last, here comes a great and solemn sound; the commanding bells of the cathedral tower, in their iron, midnight toll. Through the sombre strokes, and striking into their long echoes, pierce the thin cries of bats, that wheel in air, like lost creatures who hate themselves; the uncanny flitter-mice! They trace superb, invisibles circles on the night; crying out faintly and plaintively, with no sort of delight in their voices: things of keen teeth, furry bodies, and skeleton wings covered scantily in leather. The big moths

moths, too: they blunder against my face, and dash red trails of fire off my cigarette; so busily they spin about the darkness. *Sadducismus triumphatus!* Yes, truly: here are little, white spirits awake and at some faery work; white, as heather upon the Cornish cliffs is white, and all innocent, rare things in heaven and earth. There is nothing dreadful, it seems, about this night, and this place; no glorious fury of evil spirits, doing foul and ugly things; only the quiet town asleep under a wild sky, and gentle creatures of the night moving about ancient places. And the wind rises, with a sound of the sea, murmuring over the earth and sighing away to the sea: the trembling sea, beyond the downs, which steals into the land by great creeks and glimmering channels; with swaying, taper masts along them, and lantern lights upon black barges. Certainly, this is no Lucretian night: not that tremendous

Nox, et noctis signa severa
Noctivagæque faces cæli, flammæque volantes.

Rather, it reminds me of the Miltonic night, which is peopled alluringly with

"faery elves,
Whose midnight revels by a forest side
Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,
Or dreams he sees, while overhead the moon
Sits arbitress:"

a Miltonic night, and a Shakespearean dawn; for the white morning has just peered along the horizon, white morning, with dusky flames behind it; and the spirits, the visions, vanish away, "following darkness, like a dream."

The streets are very still, with that silence of sleeping cities, which seems ready to start into confused cries; as though the

Smiter of the Firstborn were travelling through the households. There is the Catholic chapel, in its Georgian, quaint humility; recalling an age of beautiful, despised simplicity; the age of French emigrant old priests and vicars-apostolic, who stood for the Supreme Pontiff, in grey wigs. The sweet limes are swaying against its singular, umbered windows, with their holy saints and prophets in last-century design; ruffled, querulous persons looking very bluff and blown. I wonder, how it would be inside; I suppose, night has a little weakened that lingering smell of daily incense, which seems so immemorial and so sad. Wonderful grace of the mighty Roman Church! This low square place, where the sanctuary is poor and open, without any mystical touch of retirement and of loftiness, has yet the unfailing charm, the venerable mystery, which attend the footsteps of the Church; the same air of command, the same look of pleading, fill this homely, comfortable shrine, which simple country gentlemen set up for the ministrations of harassed priests, in an age of no enthusiasm. I like to think that this quiet chapel, in the obedience of Rome, in communion with that supreme apostolate, is always open to me upon this winding little by-street; it fills me with perfect memories, and it seems to bless me.

But here is a benediction of light! the quick sun, reddening half the heavens, and rising gloriously. In the valley, clusters of elm rock and swing with the breeze, quivering for joy: far away, the bare uplands roll against the sunrise, calm and pastoral; *otia dia* of the morning. Surely the hours have gone well, and according to my preference; one dying into another, as the tobacco clouds die. My meditations, too, have been peaceful enough; and, though solitary, I have had fine companions. What would the moral philosophers, those puzzled sages, think of me? An harmless hedonist? An amateur in morals, who means well, though meaning

meaning very little? Nay! let the moralist by profession give, to whom he will, *sa musique*, *sa flamme:* to any practical person, who is a wise shareholder and zealous vestryman. For myself, my limited and dreamy self, I eschew these upright businesses; upright memories and meditations please me more, and to live with as little action as may be. Action: why do they talk of action? Match me, for pure activity, one evening of my dreams, when life and death fill my mind with their messengers, and the days of old come back to me. And now, homewards, for a little sleep; that profound and rich slumber at early dawn which is my choice delight. A sleep, bathed in musical impressions, and filled with fresh dreams, all impossible and happy; four hours, and five, and six perhaps: then the cathedral matin bell will chime in with my fancies, and I shall wake harmoniously. I shall feel infinitely cheerful, after the spirit of the *Compleat Angler;* I shall remember that I was once at Ware, and at Amwell, those placid haunts of Walton. A conviction of beauty, and contentment in life will lay hold on me, more than commonly; it is probable that I shall read *The Spectator*, and Addison, rather than Steele, at breakfast. And I know which paper it will be: it will be about *Will Wimble* coming up to the house, with two or three hazel twigs in his hand, fresh cut in *Sir Roger's* woods. Or, if I prove faithful to my great Lucretius: the man, not the book, for I read him in the Giuntine: I will read that marvellous *It ver et Venus;* that dancing masque of beauty. For *L'Allegro*, I do not read that; it is read aloud to me by the morning, with exquisite, bright cadences. After my honey from the flowers of a very rustic farm, and my coffee, from some wonderful Eastern place; and my eggs, marked by the careful housewife as she took them from her henhouse, covered with stonecrop over its old tiles; after all these delicates, now comes the first cigarette, pungent and exhilarating. As the grey blue clouds

clouds go up, the ruddy sunlight glows through them, straight as an arrow through the gold. Away they wander, out of the window, flung back upon the air, against the roses, and disappear in the buoyant morning.

My thoughts go with them, into the morning, into all the mornings over the world. They travel through the lands, and across the seas, and are everywhere at home, enjoying the presence of life. And past things, old histories, are turned to pleasant recollections: a *pot-pourri*, justly seasoned, and subtly scented; the evil humours and the monstrous tyrannies pass away, and leave only the happiness and the peace.

Call me, my dear friend, what reproachful name you please; but, by your leave, the world is better for my cheerfulness. True, should the terrible issues come upon me, demanding high courage, and finding but good temper, then give me your prayers, for I have my misdoubts. Till then, let me cultivate my place in life, nurturing its comelier flowers; taking the little things of time with a grateful relish and a mind at rest. So hours and years pass into hours and years, gently, and surely, and orderly; as these clouds, grey and blue clouds, of tobacco smoke, pass up to the air, and away upon the wind; incense of a goodly savour, cheering the thoughts of my heart, before passing away, to disappear at last.

Reiselust

By Annie Macdonell

NAY, Love, but stay thy blame ;
For if men have their claim,
The day's but theirs—
Poor gift, the day of heat and cares !
Thou hast the night, the calm cool night,
When the soul's garden blooms in sight,
With roses tinted by the moon's soft smile,
On that far fringed horizon isle.
The night, the long sweet night is thine,
Then I awake, and find thee, soul of mine.

Ah, rushing hours beneath the sun !
Ah, fevered crying haste, have done !
Yet let your coursing swifter run !
Now let the still night fall.
I hear the water lapping 'gainst the wall,
I open wide my door unto the sea
Whence Death, thy keeper, brings thee back to me.
So mild he waits without, yet laughs at Life,
That cannot give her hirelings such a wife.

Day

Day, have I not paid the toll?
My body given the whole
That will let pass my soul?
The roses of the morn lie thick on my Love's bier,
And she is risen; she is no longer here.
A star upon the stern she beckons me.
Sweet Death, one dawn, let me go back with thee,
Sweet Death, take me from out the noisy light
Into thy night, thy comforting still night.

Yea, soon, for my Love's sake,
Sweet Death my hand will take,
And I shall not awake
Till past the blooming isle.
Then shall my eyelids quiver 'neath her smile,
And I shall gaze, and from my Love's clear eyes
Shall learn her slow wide learning, and be wise,
Shall learn the speech they speak across the sea:
'Tis a large language my Love speaks to me.

Then far beyond to sail,
And further further coasts to hail,
And ventures shall not fail.
And missionary dreams my Love and I
We'll hover mid the world's troubled sky,
And sleeping men to discontent shall tease,
To venture further skies and wider seas.

Have I not guessed the meaning of the dark?
Thy hand, O Death! To-night let me embark.

"To Every Man a Damsel or Two"

By C. S.

He wandered up the carpeted steps, rather afraid all the while of the two tall men in uniform who opened the great doors wide to let him into the soft warm light and babble of voices within. At the top he paused, and slowly unbuttoned his overcoat, not knowing which way to turn; but the crowd swept him up, and carried him round, until he found himself leaning against a padded wall of plush, looking over a sea of heads at the stage far beneath. He turned round, and stood watching the happy crowd, which laughed, and talked, and nodded ceaselessly to itself. Near him, on a sofa, with a table before her, was a woman spreading herself out like some great beautiful butterfly on a bed of velvet pansies. He stood admiring her half unconsciously for some time, and at last, remembering that he was tired and sleepy, and seeing that there was still plenty of room, he threaded his way across and sat down.

The butterfly began tossing a wonderful little brown satin shoe, and tapping it against the leg of the table. Then the parasol slipped across him, and fell to the ground. He hastened to pick it up, lifting his hat as he did so. She seemed surprised, and glancing at a man leaning against the wall, caught his eye, and they both laughed. He blushed a good deal, and wondered what he

he had done wrong. She spread herself out still further in his direction, and cast side glances at him from under her Gainsborough.

"What were you laughing at just now?" he said impulsively.

"My dear boy, when?"

"With that man."

"Which man?"

"It doesn't matter," he said, blushing again.

She looked up, and winked at the man leaning against the wall.

"Have I offended you by speaking to you?" he said, looking with much concern into her eyes.

She put a little scented net of a handkerchief up to her mouth, and went into uncontrollable fits of laughter.

"What a funny boy you are!" she gasped. "Do do it again."

He looked at her in amazement, and moved a little further away.

"I'm going to tell the waiter to bring me a port—after that last bit of business."

"I don't understand all this," he said desperately: "I wish I had never spoken to you; I wish I had never come in here at all."

"You're very rude all of a sudden. Now don't be troublesome and say you're too broke to pay for drinks," she added as the waiter put the port down with great deliberation opposite her, and held out the empty tray respectfully to him. He stared.

"Why don't you pay, you cuckoo?"

Mechanically he put down a florin, and the waiter counted out the change.

There was a pause. She fingered the stem of her wine-glass, taking little sips, and watching him all the while.

"How

"How often have you been here before?" she said, suddenly catching at his sleeve. "You must tell me. I fancy I know your face: surely I've met you before somewhere?"

"This is the first time I have ever been to a music-hall," he said doggedly.

She drank off her port directly.

"Come—come away at once. Yes, all right—I'm coming with you; so go along."

"But I've only just paid to come in," he said hesitatingly.

"Never mind the paying," and she stamped her little satin foot, "but do as I tell you, and go." And taking his arm, she led him through the doors down to the steps, where the wind blew cold, and the gas jets roared fitfully above.

"Go," she said, pushing him out, "and never come here again; stick to the theatres, you will like them best." And she ran up the steps and was gone.

He rushed after her. The two tall men in uniform stepped before the doors.

"No re-admission, sir," said one, bowing respectfully and touching his cap.

"But that lady," he said, bewildered, and looking from one to the other.

The men laughed, and one of them, shrugging his shoulders, pointed to the box-office.

He turned, and walked down the steps. Was it all a dream? He glanced at his coat. The flower in his buttonhole had gone.

A Song and a Tale

By Nora Hopper

I—Lament of the Last Leprechaun

For the red shoon of the Shee,
For the falling o' the leaf,
For the wind among the reeds,
My grief!

For the sorrow of the sea,
For the song's unquickened seeds,
For the sleeping of the Shee,
My grief!

For dishonoured whitethorn-tree,
For the runes that no man reads,
Where the grey stones face the sea,
My grief!

Lissakeole, that used to be
Filled with music night and noon,
For their ancient revelry,
My grief!

For

For the empty fairy shoon,
Hollow rath and yellow leaf;
Hands unkissed to sun or moon:
My grief—my grief!

II—Aonan-na-Righ

AONAN-NA-RIGH they called him in Tir Ailella*—"Darling of the King"—but it was in idle sport, for Cathal the Red hated the son of his old age as men now have forgotten to hate; and once Aonan had sprung from his sleep with a sharp skene thrust through his arm, that had meant to drink his life-blood; and once again he had found himself alone in the heart of the battle, and he had scarcely won out of the press with his life—and with the standard of the Danish enemy. Thus it was seen that neither did the Danish spears love the "King's Darling"; and the sennachies made a song of this, and it was chanted before the King for the first time when he sat robed and crowned for the Beltane feast, and Aonan stood at his left hand, pouring out honey-wine into his father's cup. And before he drank, Cathal the King stared hard at the cup-bearer, and the red light that burned in his eyes was darkened because of the likeness in Aonan's face to his mother Acaill (dead and buried long since), whom Cathal had loved better than his first wife Eiver, who was a king's daughter, and better than the Danish slave Astrild, who bore him five sons, elder and better-loved than Aonan, for all the base blood in their veins. And of these, two were dead in the battle that had spared Aonan, and there were left to Cathal the

* Now Tirerrill, Co. Sligo.

King

King only the Druid Coloman, and Toran the boaster, and Guthbinn of the sweet voice, who as yet was too young to fight.

"Drink, Aonan-na-Righ," shrilled Astrild from her seat at the King's left hand. "Drink: lest there be death in the cup."

Aonan took up the golden cup, and gave her back smile for smile. "I drink," he said, "to my mother, Acaill of Orgiall."

But the King snatched the cup from his fingers, and dashed it down on the board, so that the yellow mead spilled and stained Astrild's cloak; but she did not dare complain, for there was the red light in Cathal's eyes that was wont to make the boldest afraid.

"Bring me another cup," he said to one that stood near. "And now, will none of ye do honour to the toast of Aonan-na-Righ? Bring ye also a cup for the prince; and, Guthbinn, put your harp aside."

So in silence they drank to the memory of Acaill of Orgiall, and afterwards they sought to spin together the threads of their broken mirth, but not easily, for Astrild, who was wont to be gayest, sat pale, with her hand on the knife hidden in her breast; and the King sat dumb and frowning, thinking, as Astrild knew, of dead Acaill: how he had loved and hated her, and, having slain her father and brothers, and brought her to Dunna Scaith a Golden Hostage wearing a golden chain, he had wedded her for her beauty's sake; and how until her child was born she had never so much as smiled or frowned for him; and how, when her babe lay in her arms, she sent for her husband, and said: "I thank thee, Cathal, who hast set me free by means of this babe. I bless thee for this last gift of thine, who for all thine other gifts have cursed thee." And Cathal remembered how he had held babe and mother to his heart, and said: "Good to hear soft words from thy mouth at last, O Acaill! Speak again to me, and softly. But she

she had not answered, for her first soft words to him were her last. And Astrild, watching him, saw his face grow black and angry, and she smiled softly to herself, and aloud she said :

"Oh, Guthbinn, sing again, and sing of thy brothers who fell to-day—sing of Oscar, the swift in battle, and Uaithne, of the dark eyes. And will my lord give leave that I, their mother, go to weep for them in my own poor house where they were born ?"

"No," said Cathal. "I bought you and your tears, girl, with gold rings, from Ocaill of Connaught. Sing to me now, and keep thy tears for to-morrow." So Astrild drove back her sorrow, and began to sing, while her son Guthbinn plucked slow music from his harpstrings.

"Earrach, Samhradh, Foghmhar, and Geimhridh,
Are over all and done :
And now the web forgets the weaver,
And earth forgets the sun.
I sowed no seed, and pulled no blossom,
Ate not of the green corn :
With empty hands and empty bosom,
Behold, I stand forlorn.
Windflower I sang, and Flower o' Sorrow,
Half-Summer, World's Delight :
I took no thought o' the coming morrow,
No care for the coming night."

Guthbinn's hand faltered on the harpstrings, and the singer stopped swiftly : but King Cathal stayed the tears in her heart with an angry word. "Have I had not always had my will ? And it is not my will now for you to weep." So Astrild sat still, and she looked at her sons : but Toran was busy boasting of the white neck and blue eyes of the new slave-girl he had won, and Coloman

was

was dreaming, as he sat with his eyes on the stars that showed through the open door: and only Guthbinn met her eyes and answered them, though he seemed to be busy with his harp. And presently Cathal rose up, bidding all keep their seats and finish out the feast, but Astrild and Aonan he bade follow him. And so they went into the farthest chamber of the House of Shields, which looked upon a deep ditch. Now the end of the chamber was a wall of wattles, and here there was cut a door that led out on a high bank which overlooked the ditch. And the King went out upon the bank, where there was a chair placed ready for him, and Astrild sat at his knee, and Aonan-na-Righ stood a little way off. And Cathal sat still for a time, holding Astrild's hand in his, and presently he said: "Who put the death in the cup to-night, Astrild, thou or Guthbinn?" And Astrild tried to draw her hand away and to rise, but he held her in her place, and asked again, "Guthbinn, or thou?" until she answered him sullenly as she knelt, "King, it was I."

"Belike, Guthbinn's hand did thy bidding," he said, in laughing fashion. "Was the death for me or for Aonan yonder, thou Red-Hair?"

And Astrild laughed as she answered, "For Aonan-na-Righ, my lord." And then she shrieked and sought to rise, for she saw death in the king's face as it bent over her.

"If thou hadst sought to slay thy master, Red-Hair, I might have forgiven thee," Cathal said; "but what had my son to do with thee, my light-o'-love?"

"Give me a day," Astrild said desperately, "and I will kill father and son, and set the light-o'-love's children on your throne, Cathal."

"I doubt it not, my wild-cat, but I will not give ye the day:" Cathal laughed. "Good courage, girl—and call thy Danish gods to aid, for there is none other to help thee, now."

"What

"What will my lord do?" Aonan said quickly, as the Dane turned a white face and flaming eyes to him. "Wouldst kill her?"

"Ay," said Cathal the King. "But first she shall leave her beauty behind her, lest she meet thy mother in the Land of Youth, and Acaill be jealous."

"Leave her beauty and breath, lord," Aonan said, drawing nearer. "If my mother Acaill lived she would not have her slain. My king, she pleased thee once; put her from thee if she vexes thee now; but leave her life, since something thou owest her."

"She would have slain thee to-day, Aonan, and if I have dealt ill by thee, I let no other deal thus. Yet if thou prayest me for thy life, girl, for love of Acaill I will give it thee."

And Cathal laughed, for he knew the Dane would not plead in that name. Astrild laughed too. "Spare thy breath, son of Acaill," she said scornfully. "To-morrow the cord may be round thy neck, and thou be in need of breath; now lord, the cord for mine——"

Cathal smiled grimly.

"Blackheart," he said, "thou hast no lack of courage. Now up," and he loosened her hands, "and fly if thou wilt—swim the ditch, and get thee to Drumcoll-choille—and Guthbinn shall die in thy stead. What! Thou wouldst liefer die? Back then to yonder chamber, where my men will deal with thee as I have ordered, and be as patient as in thee lies. A kiss first, Red-Hair; and hearken from yonder chamber if thou wilt, while Aonan sings a dirge for thee."

She went; and presently there rang from within the chamber the shrill scream of a woman's agony, and Cathal laughed to see Aonan's face turn white. "She is not as patient as thou," he said,

said, "but she will learn. Keep thou my word to her, Aonan; sing a dirge for her beauty a-dying."

"I cannot sing," Aonan-na-Righ said, shivering as there rose another shriek. "Let them slay her, my lord, and have done."

"My will runs otherwise," said Cathal, smiling. "Sing, if thou lovest thy life."

"My lord knows that I do not," Aonan answered; and Cathal smiled again.

"Belike not; but sing and lessen the Dane's punishment. When the song is finished she shall be released, and even tended well."

So Aonan sang the song of the Dane-land over the water, and the Danes that died in the Valley of Keening—which is now called Waterford; of the white skin and red hair of Astrild; of her grace and daring; of the sons that lay dead on the battle-place; of Coloman the dreamer that read the stars; and of the beautiful boy whose breast was a nest of nightingales. And then he sang—more softly—of the Isle of the Noble where Acaill dwelt, and how she would have shadowed Astrild with her pity if she had lived; and then he stopped singing and knelt before the King, dumb for a moment with the passion of his pity, for from the open door they could hear a woman moaning still.

"Lord," he said, "make an end. My life for hers—if a life the King must have; or my pain for hers—if the King must needs feed his ears with cries."

"Graciously spoken, and like Acaill's son," King Cathal said. "And Astrild shall be set free. You within the chamber take the Dane to her son the lord Coloman's keeping; and thou, my son Aonan, tarry here till I return. I may have a fancy to send thee with a message to thy mother before dawn. Nay, but come with me, and we will go see Coloman, and ask how his mother does.

does. Give me thine arm to lean on; I am tired, Aonan, I am old, and an end has come to my pleasure in slaying .... Coloman!"

They were in Coloman's chamber now, and the Druid turned from star-gazing to greet the King, with a new dark look in his gentle face. "Coloman, how does thy mother do now? She had grown too bold in her pride, but we did not slay her because of Aonan here. How works our medicine that we designed to temper her beauty?"

"Well, lord. No man will kiss my mother's beauty more."

"Good: now she will turn her feet into ways of gentleness, perhaps. Thou holdest me a grudge for this medicine o' mine, my son Coloman?"

"Lord, she is my mother," the Druid said, looking down.

"The scars will heal," Cathal said; "but—Aonan here has only seen her beautiful. Coloman, wouldst thou have him see her scarred and foul to see?"

"No, lord," the Druid said fiercely. Cathal laughed.

"Have a gift of me, then, O Coloman," he said. "Spare him from sight of a marred beauty, in what way thou canst. I give thee his eyes for thy mother's scars."

The two young men looked at each other steadily: then Aonan spoke. "Take the payment that the King offers thee, Coloman, without fear: a debt is a debt."

"And the debt is heavy."

Coloman said hoarsely: "Lord, wilt thou go and leave Aonan-na-Righ to me? And wilt thou send to me thy cunning men, Flathartach and Fadhar? I must have help."

"Aonan-na-Righ will not hinder thee, Coloman," said the King, mockingly. "He desires greatly to meet with his mother: and do thou commend me also to the Lady Eivir, whom I wedded first, and who loved me well."

"Call me also to thy mother's memory," Toran the boaster cried presently, when all was made ready, and Coloman bade draw the irons from the brazier—"if thou goest so far, Darling of the King."

"I will remember," Aonan said: and then fire and flesh met.

* * * * *

At the next Beltane feast Cathal the Red slept beside Acaill in the burial-place of the kings at Brugh, and Guthbinn sat in the high seat, Toran the boaster at his right hand. But Coloman the Druid stood on the tower-top, reading the faces of the stars; and along the road that wound its dusty way to the country of the Golden Hostages there toiled two dark figures: a woman and a man. Now the woman was hooded and masked, but under the grey hood the moonlight found a gleam of ruddy hair; and the man she led by the hand and watched over as a mother watches her son. Yet the woman was Danish Astrild, and the blind man was Aonan-na-Righ.

"De Profundis"

By S. Cornish Watkins

The hot white road winds on and on before,
The hot white road fades into haze behind,
With clinging dust each hedge is powdered o'er,
The sun is high, no shelter can we find.
A dusty bird upon a dusty spray
Sings o'er and o'er a little dreary song,
There is no rest, no rest, the livelong day,
And we are weary, and the way is long.

We know not whence we come, or whither wend,
What goal may be to which our journey draws,
Fate binds this burden on us, and the end
We know not, care not, and we must not pause.
A motley train we move. The young, the old,
Women and men, with feeble steps or strong,
Driven, like herded sheep, from fold to fold—
Oh, we are weary, and the way is long.

Vain whispers have we known, and hopes as vain;
And one, he bore a banner with a cross,
And spake wild words of comfort after pain,
And future gain to balance present loss.

But

But where he is we wot not. We have lost
All hopes we had, all faiths or right or wrong,
We have been shaken, shattered, tempest-tost,
And we are weary, and the way is long.

Yet still, within each bosom smoulders there
Some little spark that might have been divine,
Something that will not let us quite despair,
Something we cannot, if we would, resign.
Some day the spark may quicken and may guide,
And fire the soul within us, dead so long,
So may there be, when falls the eventide,
A joyous ending to a grievous song.

Two Pictures

By P. Wilson Steer

I. The Mirror

II. Skirt Dancing

A Study in Sentimentality

By Hubert Crackanthorpe

A PHANTOM regiment of giant mist-pillars swept silently across the valley; beaded drops loaded each tuft of coarse, dull-tinted grass; the peat-hags gaped like black, dripping flesh-wounds in the earth's side; the distance suggested rectangular fields and wooded slopes—vague, grey, phantasmagoric; and down over everything floated the damp of fine rain.

Alec's heavy tread crunched the turfed bridle-path rhythmically, and from the stiff rim of his clerical hat the water dribbled on to his shoulders.

It was a rugged, irregular, almost uncouth face, and now the features were vacantly huddled in a set expression, obviously habitual. The cheeks were hunched up, almost concealing the small eyes; a wet wisp of hair straggled over the puckered forehead, and the ragged, fair moustache was spangled by the rain.

At his approach the sheep scampered up the fell-side; then, stood staring through the mist in anxious stupidity. And Alec, shaking the water from his hat, strode forward with an almost imperceptible gleam on his face. It was so that he liked the valley —all colourless and blurred, with the sky close overhead, like a low, leaden ceiling.

By-and-by

By-and-by, a cluster of cottages loomed ahead—a choppy pool of black slate roofs, wanly a-glimmer in the wet. As he entered the village, a group of hard-featured men threw him a curt chorus of greetings, to which he raised his stick in response, mechanically.

He mounted the hill. Three furnace-chimneys craned their thin necks to grime the sky with a dribbling, smoky breath; high on a bank of coal-dust, blurred silhouettes of trucks stood waiting in forlorn strings; women, limp, with unkempt hair, and loose, bedraggled skirts, stood round the doorways in gossiping groups.

"Which is Mrs. Matheson's?" he stopped to ask.

"There—oop there, Mr. Burkett—by yon ash—where them childer's standin'," they answered, all speaking together, eagerly. "Look ye! that be Mrs. Matheson herself."

Alec went up to the woman. His face clouded a little, and the puffs from his pipe came briskly in rapid succession.

"Mrs. Matheson, I've only just heard—— Tell me, how did it happen?" he asked gently.

She was a stout, red-faced woman, and her eyes were all bloodshot with much crying. She wiped them hastily with the corner of her apron before answering.

"It was there, Mr. Burkett, by them rails. He was jest playin' aboot in t' road wi' Arnison's childer. At half-past one, t' grandmoother stepped across to fetch me a jug o' fresh water an' she see'd him settin' in door there. Then—mabbee twenty minutes later—t' rain coome on an' I thought to go to fetch him in. But I could'na see na sign of him anywhere. We looked oop and doon, and thought, mabbee, he'd toddled roond to t' back. An' then, all at once, Dan Arnison called to us that he was leein' in t' water, doon in beck-pool. An' Dan ran straight doon, an' carried

carried him oop to me; but t'was na use. He was quite cold and drownded. An' I went——" But the sobs, rising thickly, swallowed the rest.

Alec put his hand on her shoulder soothingly.

"Ay, I know'd ye'd be grieved, Mr. Burkett. He was the bonniest boy in all t' parish."

She lifted the apron to her eyes again, while he crossed to the railings. The wood of the posts was splintered and worm-eaten, and the lower rail was broken away. Below, the rock shelved down some fifteen feet to the beck-pool, black and oily-looking.

"It's a very dangerous place," he said, half to himself.

"Ay, Mr. Burkett, you're right," interrupted a bent and wizened old woman, tottering forward.

"This be grandmoother, Mr. Burkett," Mrs. Matheson explained. "'Twas grandmoother that see'd him last——"

"Ay, Mr. Burkett," the old woman began in a high, tremulous treble. "When I went fer to fill t' jug fer Maggie he was a-settin' on t' steps there playin with t' kitten, an' he called after me, 'Nanny!' quite happy-like; but I took na notice, but jest went on fer t' water. I shawed Mr. Allison the broken rail last month, when he was gittin' t' rents, and I told him he ought to put it into repair, with all them wee childer playin' all daytime on t' road. Didn't I, Maggie?" Mrs. Matheson assented incoherently. "An' he was very civil-like, was Mr. Allison, and he said he'd hev' it seen to. It's alus that way, Mr. Burkett," the old woman concluded, shaking her head wisely. "Folks wait till some accident occurs, and then they think to bestir themselves."

Alec turned to the mother, and touched her thick, nerveless hand.

"There, there, Mrs. Matheson, don't take on so," he said.

At

At his touch her sobbing suddenly ceased, and she let her apron fall.

"Will ye na coome inside, Mr. Burkett?" she asked.

And they all three went in together.

The little room had been scrubbed and tidied, and a number of chairs, ranged round the table, blocked the floor.

"We've bin busy all marnin', gitting' things a bit smartened oop for t' inquest. T' coroner's cooming at twelve," the grandmother explained.

"Will ye coome oopstairs, Mr. Burkett—jest—jest to tak' a look at him?" Mrs. Matheson asked in a subdued voice.

Alec followed her, squeezing his burly frame up the narrow, creaking staircase.

The child lay on the clean, white bed. A look of still serenity slept on his pallid face. His tawny curls were smoothed back, and some snowdrops were scattered over the coverlet. All was quite simple.

Mrs. Matheson stood in the doorway, struggling noisily with her sobs.

"It is God's will," Alec said quietly.

"He was turned four last week," she blurted out. "Ye'll excuse me, Mr. Burkett, but I'm that overdone that I jest canna' help myself," and she sank into a chair.

He knelt by the dead child's side and prayed, while the slow rise and fall of the mother's sobs filled the room. When he rose his eyes were all moist.

"God will help you, if you ask Him. His ways are secret. We cannot understand His purpose. But have faith in Him. He has done it for the best," he said.

"Ay, I know, I know, Mr. Burkett. But ye see he was the youngest, and that bonny——"

"Let

"Let me try to comfort you," he said.

* * * * *

When they came downstairs again, her face was calmer and her voice steadier. The coroner, a dapper man with a bright-red tie, was taking off his gloves and macintosh ; the room was fast filling with silent figures, and the old grandmother was hobbling to and fro with noisy, excited importance.

"Will ye na' stay for t' inquest ? "

Alec shook his head. "No, I can't stop now. I have a School-board meeting to go to. But I will come up this afternoon."

"Thank'ee, Mr. Burkett, God bless thee," said Mrs. Matheson.

He shook hands with the coroner, who was grumbling concerning the weather ; then strode out back down the valley.

Though long since he had grown familiar with the aspects of suffering, that scene in the cottage, by reason of its very simplicity, had affected him strangely. His heart was full of slow sorrow for the woman's trouble, and the image of the child, lying beautiful in its death-sleep, passed and repassed in his mind.

By-and-bye, the moaning of the wind, the whirling of lost leaves, the inky shingle-beds that stained the fell-sides, inclined his thoughts to a listless brooding.

Life seemed dull, inevitable, draped in sombre, drifting shadows, like the valley-head. Yet in all good he saw the hand of God, a mysterious, invisible force, ever imperiously at work beneath the ravages of suffering and of sin.

It was close upon six o'clock when he reached home. He was drenched to the skin, and as he sat before the fire, dense clouds of steam rose from his mud-stained boots and trousers.

"Now, Mr. Burkett, jest ye gang and tak off them things, while I make yer tea. Ye'll catch yer death one of these days—I know ye will. I sometimes think ye haven't more sense than a boy,

a boy, traipsin' about all t' day in t' wet, and niver takin' yer meals proper-like."

A faint smile flickered across his face. He was used to his landlady's scoldings.

"A child was drowned yesterday in the beck up at Beda Cottages. I had to go back there this afternoon to arrange about the funeral," he mumbled, half-apologetically.

Mrs. Parkin snorted defiantly, bustling round the table as she spread the cloth. Presently she broke out again:

"An' noo, ye set there lookin' as white as a bogle. Why don't ye go an' git them wet clothes off. Ye're fair wringin'."

He obeyed; though the effort to rise was great. He felt curiously cold: his teeth were clacking, and the warmth from the flames seemed delicious.

In his bedroom a dizziness caught him, and it was a moment before he could recognise the familiar objects. And he realised that he was ill, and looked at himself in the glass with a dull, scared expression. He struggled through his dressing however, and went back to his tea. But, though he had eaten nothing since the morning, he had no appetite; so, from sheer force of habit, he lit a pipe, wheeling his chair close to the fire.

And, as the heat penetrated him, his thoughts spun aimlessly round the day's events, till these gradually drifted into the background of his mind, as it were, and he and they seemed to have become altogether detached. His forehead was burning, and a drowsy, delicious sense of physical weakness was stealing over his limbs. He was going to be ill, he remembered; and it was with vague relief that he looked forward to the prospect of long days of monotonous inactivity, long days of repose from the daily routine of fatigue. The details of each day's work, the accomplishment of which, before, had appeared so indispensable, now, he felt in his lassitude,

lassitude, had faded to insignificance. Mrs. Parkin was right: he had been overdoing himself; and with a clear conscience he would take a forced holiday in bed. Things in the parish would get along without him till the end of the week. There was only the drowned child's funeral, and, if he could not go, Milner, the neighbouring vicar, would take it for him. His pipe slipped from his hand to the hearthrug noiselessly, and his head sank forward. . . .

He was dreaming of the old churchyard. The trees were rocking their slim, bare arms; drip, drip, drip, the drops pattered on to the tombstones, tight-huddled in the white, wet light of the moon; the breath of the old churchyard tasted warm and moist, like the reek of horses after a long journey.

The child's funeral was finished. Mrs. Matheson had cried noisily into her apron; the mourners were all gone now; and alone, he sat down on the fresh-dug grave. By the moonlight he tried to decipher the names carved on the slabs; but most of the letters had faded away, and moss-cushions had hidden the rest. Then he found it—"George Matheson, aged four years and five days," and underneath were carved Mrs. Matheson's words: "He was the bonniest boy in all the parish." He sat on, with the dread of death upon him, the thought of that black senselessness ahead, possessing him, so sudden, so near, so intimate, that it seemed entirely strange to have lived on, forgetful of it. By-and-bye, he saw her coming towards him—Ethel, like a figure from a picture, wearing a white dress that trailed behind her, a red rose pinned at the waist, and the old smile on her lips. And she came beside him, and told him how her husband had gone away for ever, and he understood at once that he and she were betrothed again, as it had been five years ago. He tried to answer her, but somehow the words would not come; and, as he was striving

striving to frame them, there came a great crash. A bough clattered down on the tombstones ; and with a start he awoke.

A half-burned coal was smoking in the fender. He felt as if he had been sleeping for many hours.

He fell to stupidly watching the red-heat, as it pulsed through the caves of coal, to imagining himself climbing their ashen mountain-ridges, across dark defiles, up the face of treacherous precipices. . . .

Hundreds of times, here, in this room, in this chair, before this fire, he had sat smoking, picturing the old scenes to himself, musing of Ethel Fulton (Ethel Winn she had been then ; but, after her marriage, he had forced himself to think of her as bearing her husband's name—that was a mortification from which he had derived a sort of bitter satisfaction). But now, with the long accumulation of his solitude—five years he had been vicar of Scarsdale—he had grown so unconscious of self, so indifferent to the course of his own existence, that every process of his mind had, from sheer lack of external stimulation, stagnated, till, little by little, the growth of mechanical habit had come to mould its shape and determine its limitations. And hence, not for a moment had he ever realised the grip that this habit of sentimental reminiscence had taken on him, nor the grotesque extent of its futile repetition. Such was the fervour of his attitude towards his single chapter of romance.

Five years ago, she and he had promised their lives to one another. And the future had beckoned them onward, gaily, belittling every obstacle in its suffusion of glad, alluring colour. He was poor : he had but his curate's stipend, and she was used to a regular routine of ease. But he would have tended her wants, waiting on her, watching over her, indefatigably ; chastening all the best that was in him, that he might lay it at her feet. And together,

together, hand in hand, they would have laboured in God's service. At least so it seemed to him now.

Then had come an enforced separation; and later, after a prolonged, unaccountable delay, a letter from her explaining, in trite, discursive phrases, how it could never be—it was a mistake—she had not known her own mind—now she could see things clearer—she hoped he would forgive and forget her.

A wild determination to go at once to her, to plead with her, gripped him; but for three days he was helpless, bound fast by parish duties. And when at last he found himself free, he had already begun to perceive the hopelessness of such an errand, and, with crushed and dogged despair, to accept his fate as irrevocable.

In his boyhood—at the local grammar-school, where his ugliness had made him the butt of his class, and later, at an insignificant Oxford college, where, to spare his father, whose glebe was at the time untenanted, he had set himself grimly to live on an impossibly slender allowance—at every turn of his life, he had found himself at a disadvantage with his fellows. Thus he had suffered much, dumbly—meekly many would have said—without a sign of resentment, or desire for retaliation. But all the while, in his tenacious, long-suffering way, he was stubbornly inuring himself to an acceptance of his own disqualifications. And so, once rudely awakened from his dream of love, he wondered with heavy curiosity at his faith in its glamorous reality, and, remembering the tenour of his life, suffered bitterly like a man befooled by his own conceit.

Some months after the shattering of his romance, the rumour reached him that James Fulton, a prosperous solicitor in the town, was courting her. The thing was impossible, a piece of idle gossip, he reasoned with himself. Before long, however, he heard it again, in a manner that left no outlet for doubt.

It seemed utterly strange, unaccountable, that she, whose eager echoing of all his own spiritual fervour and enthusiasm for the work of the Church still rang in his ears, should have chosen a man, whose sole talk had seemed to be of dogs and of horses, of guns and of game; a man thick-minded, unthinking, self-complacent; a man whom he himself had carelessly despised as devoid of any spark of spirituality.

And, at this moment, when the first smartings of bitter bewilderment were upon him, the little living of Scarsdale fell vacant, and his rector, perhaps not unmindful of his trouble, suggested that he should apply for it.

The valley was desolate and full of sombre beauty; the parish, sparsely-peopled but extensive; the life there would be monotonous, almost grim, with long hours of lonely brooding. The living was offered to him. He accepted it excitedly.

And there, busied with his new responsibilities, throwing himself into the work with a suppressed, ascetic ardour, news of the outside world reached him vaguely, as if from afar.

He read of her wedding in the local newspaper: later, a few trite details of her surroundings; and then, nothing more.

But her figure remained still resplendent in his memory, and, as time slipped by, grew into a sort of gleaming shrine, incarnating for him all the beauty of womanhood. And gradually, this incarnation grew detached, as it were, from her real personality, so that, when twice a year he went back to spend Sunday with his old rector, to preach a sermon in the parish church, he felt no shrinking dread lest he should meet her. He had long ceased to bear any resentment against her, or to doubt that she had done what was right. The part that had been his in the little drama seemed altogether of lesser importance.

* * * * *

All night he lay feverishly tossing, turning his pillow aglow with heat, from side to side; anxiously reiterating whole incoherent conversations and jumbled incidents.

At intervals, he was dimly conscious of the hiss of wind-swept leaves outside, and of rain-gusts rattling the window-panes; and later, of the sickly light of early morning streaking the ceiling with curious patterns. By-and-bye, he dropped into a fitful sleep, and forgot the stifling heat of his bed.

Then the room had grown half full of daylight, and Mrs. Parkin was there, fidgetting with the curtains. She said something which he did not hear, and he mumbled that he had slept badly, and that his head was aching.

Some time later—how long he did not know—she appeared again, and a man, whom he presently understood to be a doctor, and who put a thermometer, the touch of which was deliciously cool, under his armpit, and sat down at the table to write. Mrs. Parkin and he talked in whispers at the foot of the bed: they went away; Mrs. Parkin brought him a cup of beef-tea and some toast; and then he remembered only the blurred memories of queer, unfinished dreams.

Consciousness seemed to return to him all of a sudden; and, when it was come, he understood dimly that, somehow, the fatigue of long pain was over, and he tasted the peaceful calm of utter lassitude.

He lay quite still, his gaze following Mrs. Parkin, as she moved to and fro across the room, till it fell on a basket-full of grapes that stood by the bedside. They were unfamiliar, inexplicable; they puzzled him; and for awhile he feebly turned the matter over in his mind. Presently she glanced at him, and he lifted his hand towards the basket.

"Would ye fancy a morsel o' fruit noo? 'Twas Mrs. Fulton that sent 'em," she said.

She held the basket towards him, and he lifted a bunch from it. They were purple grapes, large and luscious-looking. Ethel had sent them. How strange that was! For an instant he doubted if he were awake, and clutched the pillow to make sure that it was real.

"Mrs. Fulton sent them?" he repeated.

"Ay, her coachman came yesterday in t' forenoon to inquire how ye were farin', and left that fruit for ye. Ay, Mr. Burkett, but ye've had a mighty quantity o' callers. Most all t' parish has been askin' for news o' ye. An' that poor woman from t' factory cottages has been doon forenoon and night."

"How long have I been in bed?" he asked after a pause.

"Five days and five nights. Ye've bin nigh at death's door, ravin' and moanin' like a madman. But, noo, I must'na keep ye chatterin'. Ye should jest keep yeself quiet till t' doctor coomes. He'll be mighty surprised to find ye so much improved, and in possession of yer faculties."

And she left him alone.

He lay staring at the grapes, while excitement quickened every pulse. Ethel had sent them—they were from Ethel—Ethel had sent them—through his brain, to and fro, boisterously, the thought danced. And then, he started to review the past, dispassionately, critically, as if it were another man's; and soon, every detail, as he lingered on it, seemed to disentangle itself, till it all achieved a curious simplification. The five years at Scarsdale became all blurred: they resembled an eventless waste-level, through which he had been mechanically trudging. But the other day, it seemed, he was with her—he and she betrothed to one another. A dozen scenes passed before his eyes: with a flush of hot, intolerable shame, he saw himself, clumsy, uncouth, devoid of personal charm, viewing her bluntly, selfishly through the cumbrous medium of his own personality.

personality. And her attitude was clear too: the glamour, woven of habitual, sentimental reminiscence, faded, as it were, from her figure, and she appeared to him simply and beautifully human; living, vibrating, frail. *Now* he knew the meaning of that last letter of hers—the promptings of each phrase; the outpourings of his ideals, enthusiasms, aspirations—callow, blatant, crude, he named them bitterly—had scared her: she had felt herself unequal to the strain of the life he had offered her: in her loveable, womanish frailty, she had grown to dread it; and he realised all that she had suffered before she had brought herself to end it—the long struggles with doubt and suspense. The veil that had clogged his view was lifted: he knew her now: he could read the writing on her soul: he was securely equipped for loving her; and now, she had passed out of his life, beyond recall. In his blindness he had not recognised her, and had driven her away.

How came it that to-day, for the first time, all these things were made clear?

The clock struck; and while he was listening to its fading note, the door-handle clicked briskly, and the doctor walked in. He talked cheerily of the crops damaged by the storm, and the sound of his voice seemed to vibrate harshly through the room.

"There's a heavy shower coming up," he remarked. "By the way, you're quite alone here, Mr. Burkett, I believe. Have you no relatives whom you would like to send for?"

"No—no one," Alec answered. "Mrs. Parkin will look after me."

"Yes—but you see," and he came and sat down by the bedside, "I don't say there's any immediate danger; but you've had a very near touch of it. Now isn't there any old friend?—you ought not to be alone like this." He spoke the last words with emphasis.

Alec

Alec shook his head. His gaze had fallen on the basket of grapes again: he was incoherently musing of Ethel.

"Mind, I don't say there's any immediate danger," he heard the man repeating; "but I must tell you that you're not altogether out of the wood yet."

He paused.

"You ought to be prepared for the worst, Mr. Burkett."

The last phrase lingered in Alec's mind; and slowly its meaning dawned upon him.

"You mean I might die at any moment?" he asked.

"No, no—I don't say that," the other answered evasively. "But you see the fever has left you very weak; and of course in such cases one can never be quite sure——"

The rest did not reach Alec's ears; he was only vaguely aware of the murmur of the man's voice.

Presently he perceived that he had risen.

"I will come back in the afternoon," he was saying. "I'll tell Mrs.—Mrs. Parker to bring you in some breakfast."

After the doctor had gone he dozed a little . . .

Then remembered the man's words—"No immediate danger, but you must be prepared for the worst." The sense of it all flashed upon him: he understood what the man had meant: that was the way doctors always told such things he guessed. So the end was near . . . He wondered, a little curiously, if it would come before to-night, or to-morrow . . . It was near, quite near, he repeated to himself; and gradually, a peacefulness permeated his whole being, and he was vaguely glad to be alone. . . .

A little while, and he would be near God He felt himself detached from the world, and at peace with all men.

His life, as he regarded it trailing behind him, across the stretch of past years, seemed inadequate, useless, pitiable almost; of his own

own personality, as he now realised it, he was ashamed—petty mortifications, groping efforts, a grotesque capacity for futile, melancholy brooding—he rejoiced that he was to have done with it. The end was near, quite near, he repeated once again.

Then, afterwards, would come rest—the infinite rest of the Saviour's tenderness, and the strange, wonderful expectation of the mysterious life to come . . . A glimpse of his own serenity, of his own fearlessness, came to him; and he was moved by a quick flush of gratitude towards God. He thought of the terror of the atheist's death—the world, a clod of dead matter blindly careering through space; humanity, a casual, senseless growth, like the pullulating insects on a rottening tree. . . .

A little while, only a little while, and he would be near God. And, softly, under his breath, he implored pardon for the countless shortcomings of his service. . . .

The German clock on the mantel-piece ticked with methodical fussiness: the flames in the grate flickered lower and lower; and one by one dropped, leaving dull-red cinders. Through the window, under the half-drawn blind, was the sky, cold with the hard, white glare of the winter sun, flashing above the bare, bony mountain-backs; and he called to mind spots in the little, desolate parish, which, with a grim, clinging love, he had come to regard as his own for always. Who would come after him, live in this house of his, officiate in the square, grey-walled church, move and work in God's service among the people? . . .

And, while he lay drowsily musing on the unfinished dream, a muffled murmur of women's voices reached his ears. By an intuition, akin perhaps to animal instinct, he knew all at once that it was she, talking with Mrs. Parkin down in the room below. Prompted by a rush of imperious impulse he raised himself on his elbow to listen.

There

There was a rustling of skirts in the passage and the sound of the voices grew clearer.

"Good day, ma'am, and thank ye very kindly, I'm sure," Mrs. Parkin was saying.

No reply came, though he was straining every nerve to catch it . . . At last, subdued, but altogether distinct, *her* voice:

"You're sure there's nothing else I can send?"

The door of his room was ajar. He dug his nails into the panel-edge, and tried to swing it open. But he could scarcely move it, and in a moment she would be gone.

Suddenly he heard his own voice—loud and queer it sounded:

"Ethel—Ethel."

Hurried steps mounted the stairs, and Mrs. Parkin's white cap and spectacled face appeared.

"What be t' matter, Mr. Burkett?" she asked breathlessly.

"Stop her—tell her."

"Dearie, dearie me, he's off wanderin' agin."

"No, no; I'm all right—tell—ask Mrs. Fulton if she would come up to see me?"

"There, there, Mr. Burkett, don't ye excite yeself. Ye're not fit to see any one, ye know that. Lie ye doon agin, or ye'll be catchin' yer death o' cauld."

"Ask her to come, please—just for a minute."

"For Heaven's sake lie doon. Ye'll be workin' yeself into a fever next. There, there, I'll ask her for ye, though I've na notion what t' doctor 'ud say."

She drew down the blind and retired, closing the door quietly behind her.

The next thing he saw was Ethel standing by his bedside.

He lay watching her without speaking. She wore a red dress trimmed

trimmed with fur ; a gold bracelet was round her gloved wrist, and a veil half-hid her features.

Presently he perceived that she was very white, that her mouth was twitching, and that her eyes were full of tears.

"Alec—I'm so sorry you're so ill . . . Are you in pain ?"

He shook his head absently. Her veil and the fur on her cloak looked odd, he thought, in the half-light of the room.

"You will be better soon : the worst is over."

"No," he answered, with a dreary smile. "I am going to die."

She burst into sobs.

"No, no, Alec . . . You must not think that."

He stretched his arm over the coverlet towards her, and felt the soft pressure of her gloved hand.

"Forgive me, Ethel, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to pain you. But it is so ; the doctor told me this morning."

She sat down by the bedside, still crying, pressing her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Ethel, how strange it seems. Do you know I haven't seen you since I left Cockermouth ?" The words came deliberately, for his mind had grown quite calm. "How the time has flown !"

Her grasp on his hand tightened, but she made no answer.

"It was very kind of you to come all this way, Ethel, to see me. Will you stay a little and let me talk to you ? It's more than five years since we've talked together, you know," and he smiled faintly. "Don't cry so, Ethel, dear. I did not mean to make you cry. There's no cause to cry, dear ; you've made me so happy."

"My poor, poor Alec," she sobbed.

"You'd almost forgotten the old days, perhaps," he continued dreamily,

dreamily, talking half to himself; "for it's a long while ago now. But to me it seems as if it had all just happened. You see I've been vegetating rather, here in this lonely, little place . . . Don't go on crying, Ethel dear . . . let me tell you about things a little. There's no harm in it now, because you know I'm——"

"Oh! don't—don't say that. You'll get better. I know you will."

"No, Ethel, I sha'n't. Something within me tells me that my course is done. Besides, I don't want to get better. I'm so happy . . . Stay a little with me, Ethel . . . I wanted to explain . . . I was stupid, selfish, in the old days——"

"It was I—I who——" she protested through her tears.

"No, you were quite right to write me that letter. I've thought that almost from the first . . . I'm sure of it," he added, as if convincing himself definitely. "It could never be . . . it was my fault . . . I was stupid and boorish and wrapped up in myself. I did not try to understand your nature . . . I didn't understand anything about women . . . I never had a sister . . . I took for granted that you were always thinking and feeling just as I was. I never tried to understand you, Ethel . . . I was not fit to be entrusted with you."

"Alec, Alec, it is not true. You were too good, too noble-hearted. I felt you were far above me. Beside you I felt I was silly and frivolous. Your standards about everything seemed so high——"

But he interrupted, unheeding her:

"You don't know, Ethel, how happy you've made me. . . . I have thought of you every day. In the evenings, I used to sit alone, remembering you and all the happy days we had together, and the remembrance of them has been a great joy to me. I used to go over them all, again and again. The day that we all went

to

to Morecambe, and that walk along the seashore, when the tide caught us, and I carried you across the water . . . the time that we went to those ruins, and you wore the primroses I picked for you. And I used to read over all your letters, and remember all the things you used to say. Downstairs, under the writing-table, there is a black, tin cash-box—the key is on my bunch—Mrs. Parkin will give it you. It's where I've kept everything that has reminded me of you, all this time. Will you take it back with you? . . . You don't know how you've helped me all these years—I wanted to tell you that . . . When I was in difficulties, I used to wonder how you would have liked me to act . . . When I was lonely and low-spirited, I used to tell myself that you were happy." He paused for breath, and his voice died slowly in the stillness of the room. "You were quite right," he murmured almost inaudibly, "I see it all quite clearly now."

She was bending over him, and was framing his face in her two hands.

"Say I was wrong," she pleaded passionately. "Say I was wicked, wrong. I loved you, Alec . . . I was promised to you. I should have been so happy with you, dear . . . Alec, my Alec, do not die . . . God will not let you die . . . He cannot be so cruel . . . Come back, Alec . . . I love you . . . Do you hear, my Alec? I love you . . . Ethel loves you . . . Before God I love you . . . I was promised to you . . . I broke my word . . . I loved you all the time, but I did not know it . . . Forgive me, my Alec . . . forgive me . . . I shall love you always."

He passed his fingers over her forehead tentatively, as if he were in darkness.

"Ethel, every day, every hour, all these years, you have been with me. And now I am going away. Kiss me—just once—just once. There can be no wrong in it now."

She

She tore her veil from her face: their lips met, and her head rested a moment, sobbing on his shoulder.

"Hush! don't cry, Ethel dear, don't cry. You have made me so glad. . . . And you will remember to take the box . . . And you will think of me sometimes . . . And I shall pray God to make you happy, and I shall wait for you, Ethel, and be with you in thought, and if you have trouble, you will know that I shall be sorrowing with you. Isn't it so, dear? . . . Now, good-bye, dear one—good-bye. May God watch over you."

She had moved away. She came back again, however, and kissed his forehead reverently. But he was not aware of her return, for his mind had begun to wander.

She brushed past Mrs. Parkin in the passage, bidding her an incoherent good-bye: she was instinctively impatient to escape to the protection of familiar surroundings. Inside the house, she felt helpless, dizzy: the melodrama of the whole scene had stunned her senses, and pity for him was rushing through her in waves of pulsing emotion.

As she passed the various landmarks, which she had noted on her outward journey—a group of Scotch firs, a roofless cattle-shed, a pile of felled trees—each seemed to wear an altered aspect. With what a strange suddenness it had all happened! Yesterday the groom had brought back word that he was in delirium, and had told her of the loneliness of the house. It had seemed so sad, his lying ill, all alone: the thought had preyed on her conscience, till she had started to drive out there to inquire if there were anything she could do to help him. Now, every corner round which the cart swung, lengthened the stretch of road that separated her from that tragic scene in his room . . . Perhaps it was not right for her to drive home and leave him? But she couldn't bear to stay: it was all so dreadful. Besides, she assured herself, she could do

no

no good. There was the doctor, and that old woman who nursed him—they would see to everything . . . Poor, poor Alec—alone in that grey-walled cottage, pitched at the far end of this long, bleak valley—the half-darkened room—his wasted, feverish face—and his *knowing* that he could not live—it all came back to her vividly, and she shivered as if with cold. Death seemed hideous, awful, almost wicked in the cruelty of its ruthlessness. And the homeward drive loomed ahead, interminably—for two hours she would have to wait with the dreadful, flaring remembrance of it all—two hours—for the horse was tired, and it was thirteen miles, a man by the roadside had told her. . . .

He was noble-hearted, saint-like . . . Her pity for him welled up once more, and she convinced herself that she could have loved him, worshipped him, been worthy of him as a husband—and now he lay dying. He had revealed his whole nature to her, it seemed. No one had ever understood, as she did now, what a fine character he was in reality. Her cheeks grew hot with indignation and shame, as she remembered how she had heard people laugh at him behind his back, refer to him mockingly as the 'love-sick curate.' And all this while—for five whole years—he had gone on caring for her—thinking of her each day, reading her letters, recalling the things she used to say—yes, those were his very words. Before, she had never suspected that it was in his nature to take it so horribly tragically; yet, somehow, directly he had fixed his eyes on her in that excited way, she had half-guessed it. . . .

The horse's trot slackened to a walk, and the wheels crunched over a bed of newly-strewn stones . . . She was considering how much of what had happened she could relate to Jim. Oh! the awfulness of his *knowing beforehand* like that! She had kissed him: she had told him that she cared for him: she hadn't been

been able to help doing that. There was no harm in it; she had made him happier—he had said so himself . . . But Jim wouldn't understand: he would be angry with her for having gone, perhaps. He wouldn't see that she couldn't have done anything else. No, she couldn't bear to tell him: besides, it seemed somehow like treachery to Alec . . . Oh! it must be awful to *know beforehand* like that! . . . The doctor should never have told him. It was horrible, cruel . . . In the past how she had been to blame—she saw that now: thoughtless, selfish, altogether beneath him.

It was like a chapter in a novel. His loving her silently all these years, and telling her about it on his deathbed. At the thought of it she thrilled with subtle pride: it illuminated the whole ordinariness of her life. The next moment the train of her own thoughts shamed her. Poor, poor Alec. . . . And to reinforce her pity, she recalled the tragic setting of the scene.

That woman—his landlady—could she have heard anything, she wondered with a twinge of dread? No, the door was shut, and his voice had been very low.

The horse turned on to the main road, and pricking his ears, quickened his pace.

She would remember him always. Every day, she would think of him, as he had asked her to do—she would never forget to do that. And, if she were in trouble, or difficulty, she would turn her thoughts towards him, just as he had told her he used to do. She would try to become better—more religious—for his sake. She would read her Bible each morning, as she knew had been his habit. These little things were all she could do now. Her attitude in the future she would make worthy of his in the past . . . He would become the secret guiding-star of her life: *it* would be her hidden chapter of romance. . . .

The

The box—that box which he had asked her to take. She had promised, and she had forgotten it. How could she get it? It was too late to turn back now. Jim would be waiting for her. She would only just be in time for dinner as it was . . . How could she get it? If she wrote to his landlady, and asked her to send it—it was under the writing-table in the sitting-room he had said . . . She *must* get it, somehow. . . .

It was dark before she reached home. Jim was angry with her for being late, and for having driven all the way without a servant. She paid no heed to his upbraiding; but told him shortly that Alec was still in great danger. He muttered some perfunctory expression of regret, and went off to the stables to order a bran-mash for the horse. His insensibility to the importance of the tragedy she had been witnessing, exasperated her: she felt bitterly mortified that he could not divine all that she had been suffering.

* * * * *

The last of the winter months went, and life in the valley swept its sluggish course onwards. The bleak, spring winds rollicked, hooting from hill to hill. The cattle waited for evening, huddled under the walls of untrimmed stone; and before the fireside, in every farmhouse, new-born lambs lay helplessly bleating. On Sundays the men would loaf in churlish groups about the church door, jerk curt greetings at one another, and ask for news of Parson Burkett. It was a curate from Cockermouth who took the services in his stead—one of the new-fangled sort; a young gentleman from London way, who mouthed his words like a girl, carried company manners, and had a sight of strange clerical practices.

Alec was slowly recovering. The fever had altogether left him: a straw-coloured beard now covered his chin, and his cheeks were grown hollow and peaky-looking. But by the hay-harvest, the

the doctor reckoned, he would be as strong as ever again—so it was commonly reported.

Mrs. Parkin declared that the illness had done him a world o' good. "It's rested his mind like, and kept him from frettin'. He was alus ower given to studyin' on his own thoughts, till he got dazed like and took na notice o' things. An' noo," she would conclude, "ye should jest see him, smilin' as free as a child."

So, day after day, floated vaguely by, and to Alec the calm of their unbroken regularity was delicious. He was content to lie still for hours, thinking of nothing, remembering nothing, tasting the torpor of dreamy contemplation; watching through the window the slow drifting of the shadows; listening to the cackling of geese, and the plaintive bleating of sheep. . . .

By-and-bye, with returning strength, his senses quickened, and grew sensitive to every passing impression. To eat with elaborate deliberation his invalid meals; to watch the myriad specks of gold dancing across a bar of sunlight—these were sources of keen, exciting delight. But in the foreground of his mind, transfiguring with its glamour every trivial thought, flashed the memory of Ethel's visit. He lived through the whole scene again and again, picturing her veiled figure as it had stood by the bedside, wrapped in the red, fur cloak; and her protesting words, her passionate tears, seemed to form a mystic, indissoluble bond between them, that brightened all the future with rainbow colours.

God had given him back to her. Whether circumstances brought them together frequently, or whether they were forced to live their lives almost wholly apart, would, he told himself, matter but little. Their spiritual communion would remain unbroken. Indeed, the prospect of such separations, proving, as it did to him, the sureness of the bond between them, almost elated him. There would be unquestioning trust between them, and, though the world

world had separated them, the best that was in him belonged to her. When at length they met, there would be no need for insistance on common points of feeling, for repeated handling of past threads, as was customary with ordinary friendships. Since each could read the other's heart, that sure intuition born of chastened, spiritual love would be theirs. If trouble came to her, he would be there to sacrifice all at a moment's bidding, after the fashion of the knights of old. Because she knew him, she would have faith in him. To do her service would be his greatest joy.

At first the immobile, isolated hours of his convalescence made all these things appear simple and inevitable, like the events of a great dream. As time went on, however, he grew to chafe against his long confinement, to weary of his weakness, and of the familiar sight of every object in the room; and in the mornings, when Mrs. Parkin brought him his breakfast, he found himself longing for a letter from her—some brief word of joy that he was recovering. He yearned for some material object, the touch of which would recall her to him, as if a particle of her personality had impregnated the atoms.

Sometimes, he would force himself into believing that she would appear again, drive out to learn the progress of his recovery . . . After luncheon she would leave home . . . about half-past one, probably . . . soon after three, he would see her . . . Now, she was nearing the cross-roads . . . now climbing the hill past Longrigg's farm . . . she would have to walk the horse there . . . now, crossing the old bridge. He would lie watching the clock; and when the suspense grew intolerable, to cheat it, he would bury his head in the pillow to count up to a thousand, before glancing at the hands again. So would slip by the hour of her arrival; still, he would struggle to delude himself with all manner of excuses for

for her—she had been delayed—she had missed the turning, and had been compelled to retrace her steps. And, when at length the twilight had come, he would start to assure himself that it was to be to-morrow, and sink into a fitful dozing, recounting waking dreams of her, subtly intoxicating. . . .

* * * * *

In April came a foretaste of summer, and, for an hour or two every day, he was able to hobble downstairs. He perceived the box at once, lying in its accustomed place, and concluded that on learning that he was out of danger, she had sent it back to him. The sight of it cheered him with indefinable hope: it seemed to signify a fresh token of her faith in him: it had travelled with her back to Cockermouth on that wonderful day which had brought them together; and now, in his eyes, it was invested with a new preciousness. He unlocked it, and, somehow, to discover that its contents had not been disturbed, was a keen disappointment. He longed for proof that she had been curious to look into it, that she had thus been able to realise how he had prized every tiny object that had been consecrated for him by her. Then it flashed across him that she herself might have brought the box back, and fearing to disturb him, had gone home again without asking to see him. All that evening he brooded over this supposition; yet shrank from putting any question to Mrs. Parkin. But the following morning, a sudden impulse overcame his repugnance; and the next moment he had learned the truth. Untouched, unmoved, the box had remained all the while—she had never taken it—she had forgotten it. And depression swept through him; for it seemed that his ideal had tottered.

His prolonged isolation and his physical lassitude had quickened his emotions to an abnormal sensibility, and had led him to a constant fingering, as it were, of his successive sentimental phases. And

And these, since they constituted his sole diversion, he had unconsciously come to regard as of supreme importance. The cumbersome, complex details of life in the outside world had assumed the simplification of an indistinct background: in his vision of her figure he had perceived no perspective.

But now the grain of doubt was sown: it germinated insidiously; and soon, the whole complexion of his attitude towards her was transformed. All at once he saw a whole network of unforeseen obstacles, besetting each detail of the prospect he had been planning. Swarming uncertainty fastened on him at every turn; till at last, goaded to desperation, he stripped the gilding from the accumulated fabric of his idealised future.

And then his passion for her flamed up—ardent, unreasoning, human. After all, he loved as other men loved—that was the truth: the rest was mere calfish meandering. Stubbornly he vindicated to himself his right to love her . . . He was a man—a creature of flesh and blood, and every fibre within him was crying out for her—for the sight of her face; the sound of her voice; the clasp of her hand. Body and soul he loved her; body and soul he yearned for her . . . She had come back to him—she was his again—with passionate tears she had told him that she loved him. To fight for her, he was ready to abandon all else. At the world's laws he jibed bitterly; before God they were man and wife.

The knowledge that it lay in his power to make her his for life, to bind her to him irrevocably, brought him intoxicating relief. Henceforward he would live on, but for that end. Existence without her would be dreary, unbearable. He would resign his living and leave the church. Together they would go away, abroad: he would find some work to do in the great cities of Australia . . . She was another man's wife—but the sin would

be his—*his*, not hers—God would so judge it; and for her sake he would suffer the punishment. Besides, he told himself exultantly, the sin was it not already committed? "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

He would go to her, say to her simply that he was come for her. It should be done openly, honestly in the full light of day. New strength and deep-rooted confidence glowed within him. The wretched vacillation of his former self was put away like an old garment. Once more he sent her words of love sounding in his ears—the words that had made them man and wife before God. And on, the train of his thoughts whirled: visions of a hundred scenes flitted before his eyes—he and she together as man and wife, in a new home across the seas, where the past was all forgotten, and the present was redolent of the sure joy of perfect love. . . .

* * * * *

He was growing steadily stronger. Pacing the floor of his room, or the gravel-path before the house, when the sun was shining, each day he would methodically measure the progress of his strength. He hinted of a long sea voyage to the doctor: the man declared that it would be madness to start before ten days had elapsed. Ten days—the stretch of time seemed absurd, intolerable. But a quantity of small matters relating to the parish remained to be set in order: he had determined to leave no confusion behind him. So he mapped out a daily task for himself: thus he could already begin to work for her: thus each day's accomplishment would bring him doubly nearer to her. The curate, who had been taking his duty, came once or twice at his request to help him; for he was jealously nursing his small stock of strength. He broke the news of his approaching departure to Mrs. Parkin, and asked her to

to accept the greater portion of his furniture, as an inadequate token of his gratitude towards her for all she had done for him. The good creature wept copiously, pestered him with questions concerning his destination, and begged him to give her news of him in the future. Next he sent for a dealer from Cockermouth to buy the remainder, and disputed with him the price of each object tenaciously.

One afternoon his former rector appeared, and with tremulous cordiality wished him God-speed, assuming that the sea voyage was the result of doctor's advice. And it was when the old man was gone, and he was alone again, that, for the first time, with a spasm of pain, he caught a glimpse of the deception he was practising. But some irresistible force within him urged him forward—he was powerless—to look back was impossible now—there was more yet to be done—he must go on—there was no time to stop to think. So to deaden the rising conscience-pangs, he fiercely reminded himself that now, but five days more separated her from him. He sat down to write to his bishop and resign his living, struggling with ambiguous, formal phrases, impetuously attributing to his physical weakness his inability to frame them.

The letter at length finished, instinctively dreading fresh gnawings of uneasiness, he forced himself feverishly into thinking of plans for the future, busying his mind with time-tables, searching for particulars of steamers, turning over the leaves of his bank-book. All the money which his father had left to him had remained untouched: for three years they could live comfortably on the capital; meanwhile he would have found some work.

At last, when, with the growing twilight, the hills outside were hurriedly darkening, he sank back wearily in his chair. And all at once he perceived with dismay that nothing remained for him to do, nothing with which he could occupy his mind. For the moment

moment he was alone with himself, and looking backwards, realisation of the eager facility with which he had successively severed each link, and the rapidity with which he had set himself drifting towards a future, impenetrable, with mysterious uncertainty, stole over him. He had done it all, he told himself, deliberately, unaided ; bewildered, he tried to bring himself face to face with his former self, to survey himself as he had been before the fever—that afternoon when he had gone up to Beda Cottages—plodding indifferently through life in the joyless, walled-in valley, which, he now understood, had in a measure reflected the spirit of his own listless broodings. Scared remorse seized him. The prospect of departure, now that it was close at hand, frightened him ; left him aching as with the burden of dead weight, so that, for a while, he remained inert, dully acquiescing in his accumulating disquietude.

Then, in desperation, he invoked her figure, imagining a dozen incoherent versions of the coming scene—the tense words of greeting, his passionate pleading, her impulsive yielding, and the acknowledgment of her trust in him. . . .

By-and-bye, Mrs. Parkin brought him his dinner. He chatted to her with apparent unconcern, jested regarding his appetite ; for a curious calm, the lucidity evoked by suppressed elation, pervaded him.

But through the night he tossed restlessly, waking in the darkness to find himself throbbing with triumphant exhilaration ; each time striking matches to examine the face of his watch, and beginning afresh to calculate the hours that separated him from the moment that was to bind them together—the irrevocable starting towards the future years.

* * * * *

She stood in the bow-window of her drawing-room, arranging some cut flowers in slender pink and blue vases, striped with enamel of

of imitation gold. Behind her, the room, uncomfortably ornamental, repeated the three notes of colour—gilt paper shavings filling the grate; gilt-legged chairs and tables; stiff, shiny, pink chintzes encasing the furniture; on the wall a blue-patterned paper, all speckled with stars of gold.

Outside, the little lawn, bathed in the fresh morning sunlight, glowed a luscious green, and the trim flower-beds swelled with heightened colours. A white fox-terrier came waddling along the garden path: she lifted the animal inside the window, stroking his sleek sides with an effusive demonstration of affection. Would Jim remember to be home in good time, she was idly wondering; she had forgotten to remind him before he went to his office, that to-night she was to sing at a local concert.

Suddenly, she caught sight of a man's figure crossing the lawn. For an instant she thought it was an old clerk, whom Jim sometimes employed to carry messages. Then she saw that it was Alec—coming straight towards her. Her first impulse was to escape from him; but noticing that his gaze was fixed on the ground, she retreated behind an angle of the window, and stood watching him . . . Poor Alec! He was going away on a sea-voyage for his health, so Jim had heard it said in the town; and she formed a hasty resolve to be very kind to the poor fellow. Yet her vanity felt a prick of pique, as she noticed that his gait was grown more gaunt, more ungainly than ever; and she resented that his haggard face, his stubbly beard, which, when he lay ill, had signified tense tragedy, should now seem simply uncouth. Still, she awaited his appearance excitedly; anticipating a renewed proof of his touching, dog-like devotion to her, and with a fresh thrill of unconscious gratitude to him for having supplied that scene to which she could look back with secret, sentimental pride.

The maid let him into the room. As he advanced towards her,

her, she saw him brush his forehead with his hand impatiently, as if to rid his brain of an importunate thought. He took her outstretched hand: the forced cheeriness of her phrase of greeting died away, as she felt his gaze searching her face.

"Let us sit down," he said abruptly.

"I'm all right again, now," he began with a brisk, level laugh; and it occurred to her that perhaps the illness had affected his mind.

"I'm so glad of that," she stammered in reply; "so very glad. . . . And you're going away, aren't you, for a long sea voyage? That will do you ever so much good——"

But before she had finished speaking, he was kneeling on the carpet before her, pouring out incoherent phrases. Bewildered, she gazed at him, only noticing the clumsy breadth of his shoulders.

"Listen to me, Ethel, listen," he was saying. "Everything is ready—I've given it all up—my living—the Church. I can't bear it any longer—life without you, I mean . . . You are everything to me—I only want you—I care for nothing else now. I am going away to Australia. You will come with me, Ethel—you said you loved me . . . We love one another—come with me—let us start life afresh. I can't go on living without you . . . I thought it would be easy for you to come; I see now that perhaps it's difficult. You have your home: I see that . . . But have trust in me—I will make it up to you. Together we will start afresh—make a new home—a new life. I will give you every moment; I will be your slave . . . Listen to me, Ethel; let us go away. Everything is ready—I've got money—I've arranged everything. We can go up to London to-morrow. The steamer starts on Thursday."

The sound of his voice ceased. She was staring at the door, filled with dread lest it should open, and the maid should see him kneeling on the carpet.

"Don't,"

"Don't," she exclaimed, grasping his coat. "Get up, quick."

He rose, awkwardly she thought, and stood before her.

"We were so happy together once, dear—do you remember—in the first days, when you promised yourself to me? And now I know that in your heart you still care for me. You said so. Say you will come—say you will trust me—you will start to-morrow. If you can't come so soon I will wait, wait till you can come," he added, and she felt the trembling touch of his hands on hers, and his breath beating on her face.

"Don't, please," and she pushed back his hands. "Some one might see."

"What does it matter, my darling? We are going to belong to one another for always. I am going to wait for you, darling—to be your slave—to give up every moment of my life to you . . . It's the thought of you that's made me live, dear . . . You brought me back to life, that day you came . . . I've thought of nothing but you since. I've been arranging it all——"

"It's impossible," she interrupted.

"No, dear, it's not impossible," he pleaded.

"You've resigned your living—left the Church?" she asked incredulously.

"Yes, everything," he answered proudly.

"And all because you cared so for me?"

"I can't begin to live again without you. I would suffer eternal punishment gladly to win you . . . You will trust yourself to me darling; say you will trust me."

"Of course, Alec, I trust you. But you've no right to——"

"Oh! because you're married, and it's a sin, and I'm a clergyman. But I'm a man first. And for you I've given it all up—everything. You don't understand my love for you."

"Yes, yes, I do," she answered quickly, alarmed by the earnest-

ness

ness of his passion, yet remembering vaguely that she had read of such things in books.

"You will come to-morrow, darling—you will have trust in me?"

"You are mad, Alec. You don't know what you are saying. It would be absurd."

"It's because you don't understand how I love you, that you say that," he broke out fiercely. "You can't understand—you can't understand.

"Yes, I can," she protested, instinctively eager to vie with his display of emotion.

"Then say you will come—promise it, promise it," he cried; and his features were all distorted by suspense.

But at this climax of his insistance, she lost consciousness of her own attitude. She seemed suddenly to see all that clumsiness which had made her refuse him before.

"It's altogether ridiculous," she answered shortly.

He recoiled from her: he seemed to stiffen a little all over; and she felt rising impatience at his grotesque denseness in persisting.

"You say it's altogether ridiculous?" he repeated after her slowly.

"Yes, of course it's ridiculous," she repeated with uneasy emphasis. "I'm very sorry you should mind—feel it so—but it isn't my fault."

"Why did you say then that before God you loved me, when you came that day?" he burst out with concentrated bitterness.

"Because I thought you were dying." The bald statement of the truth sprang to her lips—a spontaneous, irresistible betrayal.

"I see

"I see—I see," he muttered. His hands clenched till the knuckles showed white.

"I'm very sorry," she added lamely. Her tone was gentler, for his dumb suffering moved her sensibilities. In her agitation, the crudity of her avowal had slipped her notice.

"That's no use," he answered wearily.

"Alec, don't be angry with me. Can't we be friends? Don't you see yourself now that it was mad, absurd?" she argued, eager to reinstate herself in his eyes. Then, as he made no answer, "Let us be friends, Alec, and you will go back to Scarsdale, when you are well and strong. You will give up nothing for my sake. I should not wish that, you know, Alec."

"Yes," he assented mechanically, "I shall go back."

"I shall always think of this morning," she continued, growing sentimentally remorseful as the sensation of rising relief pervaded her. "And you will soon forget all about it," she added, with a cheeriness of tone that rang false; and paused, awaiting his answer.

"And I shall forget all about it," he repeated after her.

To mask her disappointment, she assumed a silly, nervous gaiety.

"And I shall keep it quite secret that you were so naughty as to ask me to run away with you. I sha'n't even tell Jim."

He nodded stupidly.

With a thin, empty smile on her face, she was debating how best to part with him, when, of a sudden, he rose, and, without a word, walked out of the room.

He strode away across the lawn, and, as she watched his retreating figure, she felt for him a shallow compassion, not unmingled with contempt.

George Meredith

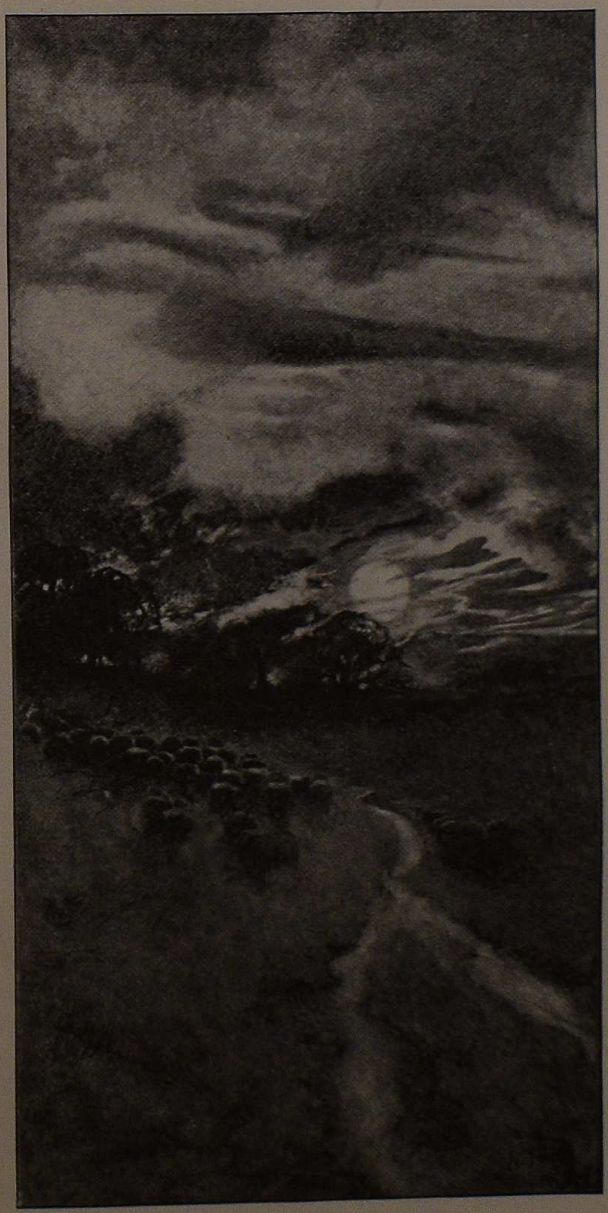
By Morton Fullerton

DEEPEST and keenest of our time who pace
The variant by-paths of the uncertain heart,
In undiscerned mysterious ways apart,
Thou huntest on the Assyrian monster's trace:
That sweeping-pinioned Thing—with human face,
Poor Man, with wings hoof-weighted lest they start
To try the breeze above this human mart,
In heights pre-occupied of a god-like race.

Among the stammering sophists of the age
Thy words are absolute, thy vision true;
No hand but thine is found to fit the gage
The Titan, Shakespeare, to a whole world threw.
Till thou hadst boldly to his challenge sprung,
No rival had he in our English tongue.

A Sunset

By William Hyde



Jeanne-Marie

By Leila Macdonald

I

JEANNE-MARIE lived alone in the white cottage at the far end of the village street.

It was a long narrow street of tall houses, stretching each side of the white shining road, for two hundred yards or more. A street that was cool and shadeful even in the shadeless summer days, when the sun burned most hotly, when the broad roads dazzled between their avenues of plane-tree and poplar, and the mountains disappeared from the horizon in the blue haze of heat.

From her little garden Jeanne-Marie liked to look at the mountains each morning, and, when for two or three days following they were not to be seen, she would shake her head reproachfully, as at the failing of old friends.

"My boys, Jeanne-Marie is only thirty-seven," Bourdet the innkeeper said to his companions, as they sat, one May afternoon, smoking under the chestnut-trees in front of the café. They all looked up as he spoke, and watched Jeanne-Marie, as she walked slowly past them to her cottage.

"Bourdet has been paying court," said Leguillon, the fat, red-faced

faced butcher, with a chuckle, as he puffed at his long pipe. "You see, he is anxious we should think her of an age suitable, before he tells us the betrothals are arranged."

"For my part I should give many congratulations," said the village postman and tobacconist, gruffly. "Jeanne-Marie is worth any of our girls of the village, with their bright dresses and silly giggles."

Bourdet laughed. "You shall come to the wedding, my friends," he said, with a wink and a nod of the head to the retreating figure; "and since our friend Minaud there finds the girls so distasteful, he shall wait till our babies are old enough, and be betrothed to one of them."

The postmaster laughed with the rest. "But seriously," he said, "Bourdet will pardon me if I tell him our Jeanne-Marie is a good deal past the thirties."

Laurent, the good-looking young farmer, who stood leaning against the tree round which their chairs were gathered, answered him gravely. "Wait, *beau-père*, till you see her on Sunday coming from Mass on M. Bourdet's arm; the cap that hides the grey knot of hair at the back of the head is neat and bright—oh! so bright—pink or blue for choice, and if M. Bourdet chances to compliment the colour of the stockings—he is gay, you know, always—the yellow face turns rosy and all the wrinkles go." And laughing maliciously at Bourdet, the young fellow turned away homewards.

Bourdet looked grave. "'Tis your son-in-law that speaks like that, Minaud," he said, "otherwise I would say that in my day the young fellows found it better to amuse themselves with the young girls than to mock at the old ones."

"You are right, my friend," said Minaud. "'Tis the regiment that taught Laurent this, and many other things. But it is a good

good boy, though with a sharp tongue. To these young ones it seems all foolishness to be an old girl."

And the others nodded agreement.

So they sat, chatting, and drawing at their long pipes, while the afternoon sun gleamed on the little gardens and on the closed green shutters of the houses ; and the slow, large oxen lumbered through the village street, their yoked heads pressed well down, and their tails flicking unceasingly at the swarm of flies.

Jeanne-Marie stood in her garden, blinking thoughtfully at the flowers, while she shaded her eyes with her hand. On her bare head the sparse brown hair was parted severely and neatly to each side, and the deep southern eyes looked steadily out of the tanned and wrinkled face. Her light cotton bodice fell away from the thin lines of her neck and shoulders, and her sabots clicked harshly as she moved about the garden.

"At least the good God has given me a fine crab-apple bloom this year," Jeanne-Marie said, as she looked at the masses of rich blossom. On the wall the monthly roses were flowering thickly, and the Guelder roses bent their heads under the weight of their heavy bunches. "In six days I shall have the peonies, and the white rose-bush in the corner is coming soon," said Jeanne-Marie contentedly.

II

It was four and a half years ago that Jeanne-Marie had come to the white cottage next to the mill, with the communal school opposite. Till that autumn day, when a pair of stout oxen had brought her goods to the door, she had lived with her brother, who was *métayer* to M. François, the owner of the big villa a quarter of

of a mile beyond the village. Her father had been *métayer;* and when he died, his son Firman—a fine-looking young man, not long home from his service—had taken his place. So the change at the *métairie* had very little affected Jeanne-Marie.

But she missed her father sorely every day at mid-day, when she remembered that there was one less to cook for; that the tall, straight old figure would not come in at the door, and that the black pudding might remain uncooked for all Firman's noticing; and Jeanne-Marie would put the bouillon by the fire, and sit down and cry softly to herself.

They were very kind to her at the villa, and at night, when Firman was at the café, she would take the stockings and the linen and darn them in the kitchen, while she listened to the servants' talk, and suppressed her *patois* as much as possible, for they were from the North, and would not understand.

Two years after her father's death, Jeanne-Marie began to notice that Firman went no more to the café in the evening, and had always his shirt clean, and his best black smocked cape for the market in the town on Mondays, and for Mass on Sundays.

"It astonishes me," she had said, when she was helping M. François' cook that day the château-folk had come to *déjeûner*, unexpectedly—for Jeanne-Marie's cooking was very good indeed—"because, you understand, that is not his way at all. Now, if it were Paul Puyoo or the young André, it would be quite ordinary; but with Firman, I doubt with him it is a different thing."

And Anna had nodded her black head sagely over the *omelette aux fines herbes* as she answered: "Jeanne-Marie, Firman wishes to marry; Jeanne-Marie, for my own part, I say it's that little fat blue-eyed Suzanne from the *métairie* on the hill."

Suzanne

III

Suzanne looked very pretty the day she came home to Mr. François' *métairie*, leaning on her husband's arm ; but Jeanne-Marie was not there to see ; she was sitting in the large chair in the kitchen of the white cottage, and she was sobbing with her head in her hands. "And indeed the blessed Virgin herself must have thought me crazy, to see me sitting sobbing there, with the house in confusion, and not a thing to cook with in the kitchen," she said, shamefacedly, to Marthe Legrand from the mill, when she came in, later, to help her. "You should have remained," Marthe answered, nodding at her pityingly. "You should have remained, Jeanne-Marie ; the old house is the old house, and the good God never meant the wedding of the young ones to drive away the old ones from the door."

Jeanne-Marie drew in her breath at the words "old ones." "But the book says I am only thirty-four!" she told herself ; and that night she looked in the old Mass-book, to be sure if it could be true ; and there was the date set down very clearly, in the handwriting of Dubois, her father's oldest friend ; for Jeanne-Marie's father himself could neither read nor write—he was, as he said with pride, of the old school, "that kissed our sweethearts, and found that better than writing them long scribbles on white paper, as the young ones do now ; and thought a chat with a friend on Sundays and holidays worth more than sitting cramped up, reading the murders and the adulteries in the newspapers." So it was Dubois who wrote down the children's births in the old Mass book. Yes, there they were. Catherine first of all ; poor Catherine, who was so bright and pretty, and died that rainy

winter when she was just twelve years old. Then "Jeanne-Marie, née le 28 Novembre 1854, à minuit," and added, in the same handwriting, "On nous raconte qu'à cette heure-là nous étions en train de gagner une grande bataille en Russie! Que ça lui porte bonheur!" Eight years later: "Jacques Firman, né le 12 Fèvrier à midi." It all came back to Jeanne-Marie as she read; that scene of his birth, when she was just eight years old. She was sitting alone in the kitchen, crying, for they had told her her mother was very ill, and had been ill all the night, and just as the big clock was striking twelve she heard the voice of the neighbour who had spent the night there, calling to her: "Jeanne-Marie, viens vite, ta mère veut te voir"; and she had gone, timid and hesitating, into the darkened room. The first thing she noticed was the large fire blazing on the open hearth—she had never known her father and mother have a fire before—and she wondered much whether it was being too cold that had made her mother ill, as it had little Catherine. She looked towards the bed and saw her mother lying there, her eyes closed, and very pale—so pale that Jeanne-Marie was frightened and ran towards her father; but he was smiling where he stood by the bed, and the child was reassured. She saw him stoop and kiss his wife on the forehead, and call her his "bonne petite femme," and taking Jeanne-Marie by the hand he showed her the *sage-femme*—the *sage-femme* who had come the night before to make her mother well—sitting near the fire with a white bundle in her arms, and thanked the good God aloud that he had sent him a fine boy at last. Old Dubois had come in gently, his béret in his hand, as Jeanne-Marie's father was speaking, and turning to the bed had reiterated emphatically, "Tu as bien fait, chère dame, tu as bien fait."

Jeanne-Marie sat silently going over it all in her mind. "Té," she murmured, "how quickly they all go; the father, the mother, old

old Dubois, even Jeanne the *voisine*, is gone. I alone am left, and the good God knows if there will be any to cry for me when my turn comes to go." She shut the old Mass-book, and put it carefully back on the shelf, and she went to the old looking-glass and the tanned wrinkled face met its reflection very calmly and patiently. "I think it was the hard work in the fields when I was young," she said; "certainly Marthe was right. It is the face of an old woman, a face more worn than hers, though she is beyond forty and has borne so many children."

IV

Firman had urged his sister to stay on at the *métairie* after his marriage. "You should not go, it is not natural," he said one evening a few weeks before his wedding, while they were piling the small wood in the shed. "The old house will not be the old house without you. Suzanne wishes it also. *Parbleu!* Is it the custom for the fathers to turn their sons out, when they marry? Then, why should I let the old sister go, now my time for marrying has come? Suzanne is a good girl and pretty; and has never even looked at any young fellow in the village—for I, as you know, am particular, and I like not the manners in some villages, where a girl's modesty is counted nothing—but blood is worth the most, *ma foi*, as the old father used to say; and badly must he think of me to see the old sister making room even for the little Suzanne."

But Jeanne-Marie shook her head. "I cannot well explain it, Firman," she said. "It's not that your Suzanne comes unwelcome to me—no, the good God knows it's not that—but it would be

so strange. I should see the old mother's shadow, at the table where you sat, and in the bed where you lay. I might get foolish, and angry, Firman. So let me go, and, when the little ones come, I shall be their grandmother, and Suzanne will forgive me."

That was four and a half years ago, and it was a very lonely four and a half years at the white cottage. Even the cooking, when it was for herself alone, became uninteresting, and the zest went out of it. Jeanne-Marie, in her loneliness, hungered for the animal life that had unconsciously formed a great part of her existence at the *métairie*. Every springtime she would sit, sometimes for hours, in her garden, watching the flocks of callow geese, as they wandered along the road in front of the mill, pecking at the ground as they went, and uttering all the time their little plaintive cries, that soothed her with its echo of the old home. When the boys in their bérets, with their long poles and their loud cries of "guà, guà," drove the cows and the oxen home from the fields at sunset, Jeanne-Marie would come out of her cottage, and watch the patient, sleek beasts, as they dawdled along. And she would think longingly of the evenings at the *métairie*, when she never missed going out to see the oxen, as they lay contentedly on their prickly bedding, moving their heavy jaws slowly up and down, too lazy even to look up as she entered.

Firman loved his oxen, for they were well trained and strong, and did good work; but Jeanne-Marie would have laughed in those days, had she been told she loved the animals of the farm. "I remember," she said to Marthe of the mill one day, "how I said to the old father years ago: 'When the children of M. François came to the *métairie*, it is—"Oh, Jeanne-Marie, you will not kill that pretty little grey hen with the feathered legs," and "Oh! Jeanne-Marie, you must not drown so many kittens this time": but I say to them always: "My children, the rich have their toys and

and have the time and money to make toys of their animals ; but to us poor folk they are the useful creatures God has given us for food and work, and they are not playthings."' So I said then ; but now, ah, now Marthe, it is different. Do you remember how old Dubois for ever quarrelled with young Baptiste, but when they wrote from the regiment to tell him the boy was dead of fever, during the great manœuvres, do you remember how the old father mourned, and lay on his bed for a whole day, fasting ? So it always is, Marthe. The cow butts the calf with her horns, but when the calf is gone, the mother moans for it all the day."

Firman was too busy with his farm and his new family ties to come much to see his sister, or to notice how rarely she came up to the *métairie* now. For Suzanne had never forgiven, and that was why Jeanne-Marie walked up so seldom to M. François's *métairie*.

Did not all the village say that it was Suzanne's doing that Firman's sister left the farm on his marriage ? That Suzanne's jealousy had driven Jeanne-Marie away ? And when this came to the ears of Firman's wife, and the old folks shook their heads in her presence over the strange doings of young couples now-a-days, the relief that the dreaded division of supremacy with her husband's sister was spared her, was lost in anger against Jeanne-Marie, as the cause of this village scandal. The jealousy that she had always felt for the "chère sœur," whom Firman loved and respected, leapt up within her. "People say he loves his sister, and that it is I who part them ; they shall see—yes, they shall see."

And bit by bit, with all a woman's subtle diplomacy, she drew her husband away from his sister's affection, until in a year or two their close intimacy had weakened to a gradually slackening friendship.

At

At night-time, when Firman's passionate southern nature lay under the thrall of his wife's beauty, she would whisper to him in her soft *patois*, "Love me well, my husband, for I have only you to love; others are jealous of my happiness, and even Jeanne-Marie is envious of your wife, and of the babe that is to come."

And the hot Spanish blood, that his mother had given him, would leap to Firman's face as he took her in his arms, and swore that all he loved, loved her; and those who angered her, he cared not for.

In the first year of their marriage, when Jeanne-Marie came almost every day, Suzanne would show her with pride all the changes and alterations in the old house. "See here, my sister," she said to her one day, only six months after the wedding, when she was taking her over the house, "this room that was yours, we have dismantled for the time; did it not seem a pity to keep an unused room all furnished, for the sun to tarnish, and the damp to spoil?" And Jeanne-Marie, as she looked round on the bare walls and the empty corners of the little room, where she and Catherine had slept together in the old days, answered quietly, "Quite true, Suzanne, quite true; it would be a great pity."

That night when she and Marthe sat together in the kitchen she told her of the incident.

"But, Jeanne-Marie," Marthe interrupted eagerly, "how was it you had left your furniture there, since it was yours?"

"How was it? But because little Catherine had slept in the old bed, and sat in the old chairs, and how could I take them away from the room?"

"Better that than let Suzanne break them up for firewood," Marthe replied shortly.

When little Henri was born, a year after the marriage, Suzanne would not let Jeanne-Marie be at the *métairie*, and she sent Firman

Firman down beforehand to tell her that she feared the excitement of her presence. Jeanne-Marie knew she was disliked and distrusted; but this blow fell very heavily: though she raised her head proudly and looked her brother full in the face when he stammered out his wife's wishes.

"For the sake of our name, and what they will say in the village, I am sorry for this," she said; and Firman went without a word.

But when he was gone Jeanne-Marie's pride broke down, and in the darkness of the evening she gathered her shawl round her, and crept up to the *métairie* door.

Hour after hour she sat there, not heeding the cold or the damp, her head buried in her hands, her body rocked backwards and forwards. "I pray for Firman's child," she muttered without ceasing. "O dear Virgin! O blessed Virgin! I pray for my brother's child." And when at length an infant's feeble cry pierced through the darkness, Jeanne-Marie rose and tottered home, saying to herself contentedly, "The good God himself tells me that all is well."

Perhaps the pangs of maternity quickened the capabilities for compassion in Suzanne's peasant mind. She sent for Jeanne-Marie two days later, and watched her with silent wonder, but without a sneer, as she knelt weeping and trembling before the small new bundle of humanity.

From that day little Henri was the idol of Jeanne-Marie's heart. All the sane instincts of wifehood and motherhood, shut up irrevocably within the prison of her maiden life, found vent in her devotion to her brother's child. The natural impulses, so long denied freedom, of whose existence and force she was not even aware, avenged their long suppression in this worship of Firman's boy.

To watch the growth of the childish being, the unveiling of his physical comeliness, and the gradual awakening of his perceptions, became the interest and fascination of her life. Every morning at eleven o'clock, when the cottage showed within the open door all white and shining after her energetic scrubbings, she would put on a clean bodice, and a fresh pink handkerchief for the little coil of hair at the back of her head, and sit ready and impatient, knitting away the time, till one o'clock struck, and she could start for the farm.

She would always arrive at the same hour, when the *métairie* dinner was finished, and Suzanne's fretful complaints: "Jeanne-Marie, you are so proud, you will not come for the dinner or stay for the supper," met only a smile and a deprecating shake of the head.

On her arrival, if Suzanne were in a good temper, she would surrender Henri to her, and Jeanne-Marie's hour of heaven reached her. If it were cold, she would sit in the kitchen, crooning snatches of old tunes, or chattering soft nothings in *patois* to the sleeping child. If fine, she would wander round the garden with him in her arms, sometimes as far as the road, where a chance passer's exclamation of "Oh, le beau bébé!" would flush her face with pleasure.

If Suzanne's temper chanced to be ruffled, if Firman had displeased her, or if the fitful jealousy that sprang up at times against her *belle-sœur*, happened to be roused, she would insist that little Henri was tired, and must not be moved; and Jeanne-Marie would sit for hours sadly watching the cot, in which the child lay, not daring to touch him or comfort him, even when he moaned and moved his arms restlessly in his sleep.

So her life went on till Henri was about a year old, when Suzanne's gradually increasing exasperation reached an ungovernable

able pitch. To her jealous imagination it had seemed for some time that the boy clung more to her sister than to her, and one day things reached a climax.

Jeanne-Marie had arrived with a toy bought for three sous from a travelling pedlar, and the child had screamed, and cried, because his mother, alleging that he was tired, refused to allow Jeanne-Marie to take him or show him the toy. The boy screamed louder and louder, and Jeanne-Marie sat, silent and troubled, in her corner. Even Firman, who was yoking his oxen in the yard, came in hurriedly, hearing the noise, and finding nothing wrong, pleaded with his wife. "Mais, voyons, Suzanne," he began, persuasively, "if le petit wants to see his toy, la tante may show it him, n'est ce pas?" And Suzanne, unable to bear it any longer, almost threw her child into Jeanne-Marie's lap, bursting out, "Take him, then, and draw my baby's love from me, as you please. I want no child who hates his mother." And sobbing loudly, she rushed out. Firman followed her, his handsome face puckered with perplexity, and Jeanne-Marie and the baby were left alone. She bent low down over the deep Spanish eyes that were so like her own, and, while her tears dropped on his face, she held him to her feverishly. "Adieu," she whispered, "adieu, petit Henri. La tante must not come to see him any more, and Henri must be a good boy and love his mother." And with one long look at the child's eyes fixed on her so wonderingly, Jeanne-Marie rose softly and left the farm.

From that day started the great conflict between her love and her pride. Though, to her simple nature, the jealousy of a woman who seemed to her to have in abundance everything that made life worth living, was utterly incomprehensible, she said to herself over and over as she went home, that such a scene as that should never happen again. And as she lay in her narrow bed that night,

and

and made her resolution for the future, she seemed to feel the very fibres of her heart break within her.

Firman came down next day to beg his sister to behave as if nothing had happened. "You are pale and your face is all drawn, *chère sœur*," he told her reproachfully; "but you must not take the things like that. If poor Suzanne were herself and well, she would never have spoken as she did." But Jeanne-Marie smiled at him.

"If I am pale, Firman, it is not for worrying over Suzanne. Tell her from me, I have been selfish all this time. I will not be so again. When she can spare the little Henri, she shall send him to play here with me, by Anna." Anna was Suzanne's sixteen-year-old sister, who lived almost entirely at the *métairie* since her sister's marriage. "And every Sunday afternoon I will come up, and will sit with him in the garden as I used to do. Tell this to Suzanne, with my love."

And Firman told her; and mingled with the relief that Suzanne felt, that the face and figure which had become like a nightmare to her strained nerves, would appear only once a week at the farm, was gratitude that her sister had taken things so well. "Anna shall take him every other day," she observed to Firman, "she shall see I am not jealous; it was the pain that took me suddenly yesterday, while you were speaking. For that matter, in the afternoon there is always much for me to do, and little Henri can very well go with Anna to the cottage."

And no doubt she meant to keep her promise, but she was occupied mind and body with other things. The second baby would be born in a month, and in the afternoons, when she sat, languid and tired, she liked to have her sister Anna by her, and Henri playing by her side.

And after little Catherine was born, there was much for Anna to

to do. "I could not well spare her if I would," Suzanne would say to herself; "what with two babies and me so long in getting on my feet this time."

And Jeanne-Marie put on the clean white bodice every day before her dinner, and sat in the little garden with her eyes fixed on the turning in the white road that led to M. François's *métairie*, but it was not more than one day a week that Anna would come in sight, with little Henri in her arms. The other days Jeanne-Marie would sit, shading her eyes and watching, till long after the hour when she could expect them to appear.

At first, after the quarrel, she had believed in Suzanne's reiterated assurances that "Anna would come every other day or so," and many were the wasted afternoons of disappointment that she courted in her little garden. Sometimes she would rise to her feet, and a sudden impulse to go up to the farm, not a mile away, if only to kiss *le petit* and come home again, laid hold of her; but the memory of Suzanne's cold looks of surprise, and the "Is anything wrong, Jeanne-Marie?" that would meet her, was sufficient to force her into her chair again with a little hopeless sigh. "When the calf is gone, the mother mourns for it all the day," Marthe said grimly, when she surprised her one day watching the white turning. But Jeanne-Marie answered her miserably: "Ah, but I never butt at my calf, and they have taken it from me all the same."

There was great rejoicing in the cottage the day that Anna's white blouse and large green umbrella came in sight, and the three sat in the kitchen together: Anna eating smilingly the cakes and biscuits that grateful Jeanne-Marie made specially for her, and Henri crawling happily on the floor. "He said 'Maman' to Suzanne yesterday," Anna would announce, as Jeanne-Marie hurried to meet her at the gate; or, "Firman says he heard him

him say 'Menou,' when the white cat ran across the yard this morning." And many were the attempts to induce Henri to make these utterances again. "Je t'aime, je t'aime," Jeanne-Marie would murmur to him, as she kissed him again and again, and the little boy would look up at her with his dark eyes, and smile encouragingly.

All too quickly the time would go, and all too soon would come Anna's glance at the clock, and the dreaded words: "Suzanne will make herself angry; we must go."

And as Jeanne-Marie watched them disappear along the white road, the clouds of her loneliness would gather round her again.

The Sunday afternoons at the farm were looked forward to through all the week. There was little Catherine to admire, and in the summer days there was the orchard, where Henri loved to play, and where he and his aunt would sit together all the afternoon. If Suzanne were in a good temper, she would bring Catherine out in her arms, and the children would tumble about together in the long grass.

And so the time wore on, and as Henri grew in mind and body, and was able to prattle and run about the fields, Jeanne-Marie hungered for him with a love more absorbing than ever.

Two years had passed since Catherine's birth, and for the last year Anna would often bring her, when she came down to Jeanne-Marie's cottage. The one day a week had dropped gradually to every ten days; it was sometimes only every fortnight that one or both children would appear, and the days that little Henri came were marked white days on the simple calendar of Jeanne-Marie's heart.

Now,

V

Now, as Jeanne-Marie stood in her garden this hot May afternoon, and shaded her eyes, as she gazed at the broad white road, her face was troubled, and there was a drawn line of apprehension round the corners of her mouth. For lately Suzanne's jealous temper had flamed up again, and this alert jealousy boded evil days for Jeanne-Marie.

Several times within the last two months, little Henri—now going on for four years old—had come toddling down to the cottage by himself, to his aunt's unbounded amazement and delight. "Maman is at market," he explained with dignity the first time, in answer to the wondering queries. "Papa yoked the oxen to the big cart after dinner, and they went; Anna is talking all the afternoon to Pierre Puyoo in the road; and Henri was alone. So Henri came; Henri loves his aunt, and would like some biscuits." Great was the content of that hour in the cottage, when Jeanne-Marie sat in the big arm-chair, and the boy prattled and ate his biscuits on her knee. Anna's hard young smile, that scorned emotion, was always a *gêne* to this harmony of old and young; also, there was no need to glance anxiously at the clock; for the oxen take two hours to get home from the market, and who leaves the town till late in the afternoon? "Anna will miss *le petit*," Jeanne-Marie suggested the first time; but he answered proudly: "She will think *le petit* takes care of the geese in the meadow; do I not have charge of all the geese many afternoons? And when I am six years old, papa has promised I may guard the cows, and bring them home to milk at sundown, as André Puyoo and Georges Vidal do, each day.

day. Also, why cannot Henri come to see *la tante* when he likes ? "

But nevertheless, the second and third occasions of these happy visits, always on market-days, Jeanne-Marie became uneasy. Did Suzanne know of the boy's absences ? Were those fitful jealousies she now displayed almost every Sunday, the result of her knowledge ? And if she did not know, would there not be a burst of rage when she heard ? Should Jeanne-Marie risk this joy by telling her of its existence, and asking her permission for its continuance ? How well the hard tones of Suzanne's voice, framing each plausible objection, came to her mind, as she thought. No, she could not do it. Let the child come, and go on coming every market-day, for as long as he could. She would say no word to encourage his keeping it secret from his mother ; he would tell her one day, if he had not told her already, and then, if anger there was, surely the simple words, " May not your child visit his aunt alone ? " must bring peace again.

So Jeanne-Marie reasoned away her fears. But now, as she stood in her garden, her lips were trembling with anxiety.

Last Sunday she had been too ill to go up to the farm. A sudden agonising breathlessness, together with great dizziness, had forced her to bed, and Marthe's boy had gone up with the message. But neither that day nor the next, which was market-day, nor any following day, had Suzanne, or Anna, or little Henri come to see her. And to-day was Saturday. And she realised wearily that to-morrow she could not get to the farm ; she felt too ill and feeble. " My heart aches," she said to Marthe each day, " my heart aches."

The afternoon waned slowly, and the little group at the café increased in numbers, as the men sauntered through the village at sundown. The women stood at their doors, laughing and chatting with

with one another. M. le Curé passed down the street, smiling at the children. From the meadows came the cows and oxen, driven slowly along, their bells beating low harmonies as they went. The festive air of evening after a hot day touched all the tiny town. And Jeanne-Marie stood in her garden, waiting.

Suddenly, while she watched, her heart bounded within her, and a spasm of sudden pain drove the colour from her face, for she recognised the figure that was passing from the white turning into the broad road. Suzanne—Suzanne, who had not been near her cottage for a year—Suzanne, alone. She pressed her two hands under her left breast, and moved forward to the gate. She felt now she had known it for long. All the suspense of many days had given way to a dull certainty: little Henri was ill, was dying perhaps, and Suzanne had come with the news.

Jeanne-Marie had her hand on the latch to let her through; but she stood outside the gate, and said hoarsely, "I will not come in." Her face was flushed, there was no cap over her coil of brown hair, and she had on the dark dress she never wore except at the farm. All this Jeanne-Marie noticed mechanically, while that suffocating hurry at her heart seemed to eat away her energy and her power of speech.

But Suzanne was going to speak. The colour flamed into her face, and her teeth ground together, as if to force down the violence of her feeling, and then she spoke: "Jeanne-Marie, you have done your work well. We knew you loved our boy. You were careful always to show us how far greater was your love for him than ours. And as you could not well turn him against me before my eyes, you waited—*ma foi*, how well you did it!—you waited till I was well away, and then, you taught him to sneak down to see you, and sneak home again before my return. *Mon Dieu!* it was a worthy son to us you wished to make of him. But

But it could not be, Jeanne-Marie. Your good God, you love so well, would not have it and so ;"—there came a sob in her voice that she choked down, and Jeanne-Marie's face went a shade greyer as she listened—"it happened that I was long at the market last week, and you, knowing this would be so, because it was a big market, brought him home late, when the fever was springing from the marshes—it was Marguerite Vallée saw him and came and told me—and now these four days he has lain with fever, and the officier de santé tells us there grows something in his throat that may kill him in four days."

The hard tones left her voice in the last phrase. A shadow of the love she persuaded herself she felt for Henri sprang up, and choked her anger. She forgot Jeanne-Marie for the moment, and saw only the little figure tossing with fever and delirium, and pity for her own sorrow filled her eyes with tears. She was surprised at the calm cruelty of her own words. Looking up curiously to see how her sister would take it, she started, for Jeanne-Marie's face seemed suddenly to have grown old and grey. She was struggling breathlessly to speak, and when her voice came, it sounded far off, and weak like the voice of a sick child :

"You know well that in your anger you have lied to me. Henri may be ill—and dying ; it is not I who have made him so. You shall listen to me now, though I will not keep you here long ; for the hand that struck my mother suddenly through the heart, struck me while you were speaking. You have kept me all these days in suspense, and now you have given the blow. Be satisfied, Suzanne."

She paused, and the sound of her heavy breathing struck Suzanne's frightened senses like the knell of a doom.

"Listen to me. Henri came to me of his own will, and never did I persuade him or suggest to him to come. Never did

did he go home later than four o'clock; there was nothing done in secret; neither I, nor any in the village, thought it a crime he came to visit me. Often I have seen him keeping the geese in the long grass of the meadows at six, at seven o'clock. Seek the fever there—not on the village road before the sunset. As the good God hears me, never have I stood between that boy and his mother. Gradually you took from me every privilege my affection knew; but I said nothing. Ah, I loved him dearly; I was content to wait. But all that is over. If God grants me life—but He is good, and I think He knows my suffering all these years—I swear before Him your house shall be to me a house of strangers, Henri the child of strangers, and my brother's face unknown to me. Never shall my father's daughter hear again what I have heard from you to-day. All these years you have played upon my heart. You have watched the suffering; you have known how each word seemed so innocent, but stabbed so deep. You have seen your child wind himself round my heart, and every day, every hour, you have struggled to pluck him from me. Now, I tell you I tear your children from my heart; you have killed not only my body, but my love. Go, and leave me for ever, or by my father, I will curse you where you stand."

She tottered forward, and with one horrified look at the agony of her menacing face, Suzanne turned and ran.

And Jeanne-Marie fell all her length on the garden soil.

VI

The miller's boy saw her there, when he came past a few minutes later, and not daring to touch her, ran to the mill for help. Marthe and her husband came immediately and carried her into the cottage. At first, they thought she was dead, her face was so grey and sunken; but she came to herself, as they laid her on the bed, and shook her head faintly when Marthe suggested fetching the officier de santé.

As soon as she could speak she whispered: "No, Marthe, it is the illness of the heart that killed my mother. The doctor told her she might have lived to be old, with much care, and if no great trouble or excitement had come to her; but, you see, I was much troubled just now, and so it has come earlier. Do not send for any doctor; he could but call it by the long name they called it when my mother died, and trouble one with vain touches and questions."

So Marthe helped her to undress, and to get to bed quickly. The breathlessness and the pain had gone for a time, though she was very feeble, and could scarcely stand on her feet. But it was the grey look of her face that frightened Marthe, and her strained quietness. No questions could get out of her the story of the afternoon.

"Suzanne came to tell me little Henri was ill," was all she would say; but Marthe only shook her head, and made her own deductions.

Jeanne-Marie would not hear of her staying with her for the night, and leaving her young children alone, and so it was settled the miller's boy should sleep below in the kitchen, and if Jeanne-

Marie felt ill in the night, she would call to him, and he would fetch Marthe immediately.

Also, Marthe promised to call at the house of M. le Curé on her way home. He would be out late, since he had started only an hour ago to take the Host to old Goupé, who lay dying four kilometres away; but she would leave a message, and certainly, when he returned, however late, he would come round. It was nine o'clock before Marthe would leave, and even then she stopped reluctantly at the door, with a last look at the thin figure propped up on her pillows. "Let me stay, Jeanne-Marie," she said; "you are so pale, and yet your eyes burn. I do not like to think of the long night and you sitting here."

"It is easier than when I lie down, which brings the breathlessness. Do not worry yourself, Marthe, I shall sleep perhaps, and if I need anything, I have but to call to Jean below. Good-night, and thank you, Marthe."

The little house was very quiet. Jean had been asleep on his chair this hour past, and not a sound came from the slumbering village. There was no blind to the window of the bedroom, and Jeanne-Marie watched the moon, as it escaped slowly from the unwilling clouds, and threw its light on to the foot of the narrow bed.

For a long while she lay there, without moving, while through all her troubled, confused thoughts ran like an under-current the dull pain that wrenched at her heart. It seemed to take the coherency from her thinking, and to be the one unquiet factor in the calm that had come over her. She was surprised, herself, at this strange fatigue that had swept away even her suffering. She thought of little Henri and his illness without a pang. He seemed like some far-off person she had read about, or heard of, long ago.

She

She thought to herself, vaguely, that she must be dying, since she seemed to have lost all feeling.

Bit by bit, various little scenes between her and Henri came to her mind, with an extraordinary vividness. He was sitting on her knee in the cottage, and his clear child's voice rang like a bell in the silent room—so clearly, that Jeanne-Marie started, and wondered if she were light-headed or had been dreaming. Then the voice faded away, and she saw the cool, high grass of the orchard, and there was Henri laughing at her, and rolling among the flowers. How cool and fresh it looked; and Henri was asking her to come and play: "Tante Jeanne-Marie, viens jouer avec ton petit. Tante Jeanne-Marie, tante Jeanne-Marie!" She must throw herself on the grass with him—on the cool, waving grass. And she bent forward with outstretched arms; but the movement brought her to herself, and as she lay back on her pillows, suddenly the reality of suffering rushed back upon her, with the agonising sense of separation and of loss. Little Henri was dying; was dead perhaps; never to hear his voice, or feel his warm little arms round her neck. She could do nothing for him; he must die without her. "Tante Jeanne-Marie! Tante Jeanne-Marie!" Was he calling her, from his feverish little bed? If he called, she must go to him, she could not lie here, this suffering was choking her. She must have air, and space to breathe in; this room was suffocating her. She must go to Henri. With a desperate effort she struggled to her feet, and stood supporting herself by the bed-post. The moon, that had hidden itself in the clouds, struggled out, the long, old-fashioned glass hanging on the wall opposite the bed became one streak of light, and Jeanne-Marie, gazing at herself, met the reflection of her own face, and knew that no power on earth could make her reach the farm where little Henri lay.

She stood, as if spell-bound, marking the sunken look of the eyes, the grey-blue colour of the cheeks, the face that was the face of an old woman.

A sudden, fierce revolt against her starved life swept through her at the sight, and conquered even the physical pain raging at her heart. Still struggling for breath, she threw up her arms and tore the cotton nightgown from her shoulders, and stood there beating her breast with her hands.

"Oh, good God! good God! see here what I am. How old and shrunken before my time! Cursed be these breasts, that no child has ever suckled; cursed be this withered body, that no man has ever embraced. I could have loved, and lived long, and been made beautiful by happiness. Ah, why am I accursed? I die, unloved and neglected by my own people. No children's tears, no husband to close my eyes; old, worn out, before my time. A woman only in name—not wife, not mother. Despised and hideous before God and men—God and men."

Her voice died away in a moan, her head fell forward on her breast, and she stumbled against the bed. For a long time she lay crouched there, insensible from mere exhaustion, until, just as the clocks were striking midnight, the door opened gently, and Marthe and M. le Curé came in. Jean, awakened by the sounds overhead, had run quickly for Marthe, and coming back together, they had met M. le Curé on his way.

They raised her gently, and laid her on the bed, and finding she still breathed, Marthe ran to fetch brandy, and the Curé knelt by the bed in prayer.

Presently, the eyes opened quietly, and M. le Curé saw her lips move. He bent over her, and whispered: "You are troubled, Jeanne-Marie; you wish for the absolution?"

But her voice came back to her, and she said clearly: "To

"To die unloved, unmourned; a woman, but no wife; no mother."

She closed her eyes again. There were noises singing in her head, louder and louder; but the pain at her heart had ceased. She was conscious only of a great loneliness, as if a curtain had risen, and shut her off from the room; and again the words came, whispered from her lips: "A woman, accursed and wasted; no mother and no wife."

But some one was speaking, speaking so loudly that the sounds in her head seemed to die away. She opened her eyes, and saw M. le Curé, where he knelt, with his eyes shining on her face, and heard his voice saying: "And God said, 'Blessed be the virgins above all women; give unto them the holy places; let them be exalted and praised by My church, before all men, and before Me. Worthy are they to sit at My feet—worthy are they above all women.'"

A smile of infinite happiness and of supreme relief lit up Jeanne-Marie's face.

"Above all women," she whispered: "above all women."

And Jeanne-Marie bowed her head, and died.

Parson Herrick's Muse

By C. W. Dalmon

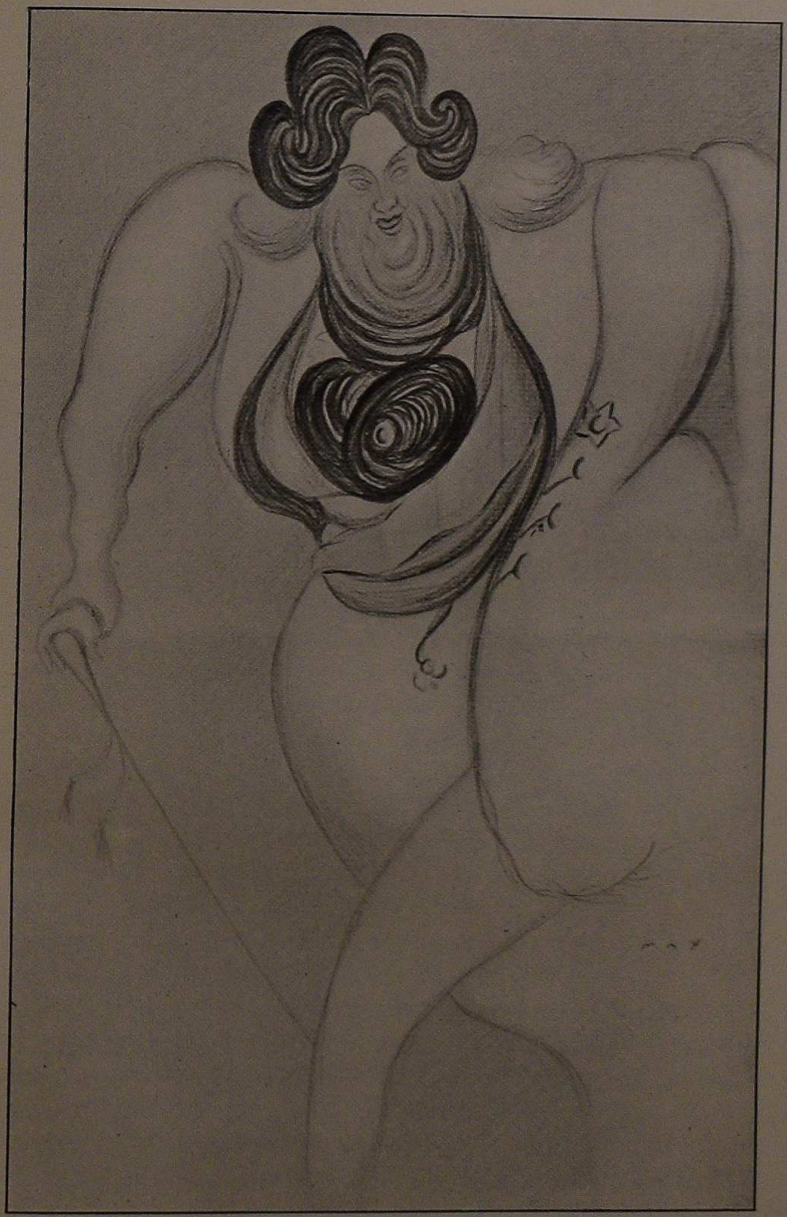
THE parson dubs us, in our cups,
"A tipsy, good-for-nothing crew!"
It matters not—it may be false;
It matters not—it may be true.
But here's to parson Herrick's Muse!
Drink to it, dear old comrades, please!
And, prithee, for my tombstone choose
A verse from his "Hesperides."

The parson's rich, but we are poor;
And we are wrong, but he is right—
Who knows how much his cellar holds,
Or how he goes to bed at night?
But here's to parson Herrick's Muse!
Drink to it, dear old comrades, please!
And, prithee, for my tombstone choose
A verse from his "Hesperides."

The landlord shall our parson be ;
The tavern-door our churchyard gate ;
And we will fill the landlord's till
Before we fill the parson's plate !
But here's to parson Herrick's Muse !
Drink to it, dear old comrades, please !
And, prithee, for my tombstone choose
A verse from his "Hesperides."

George the Fourth

By Max Beerbohm



A Note on George the Fourth

By Max Beerbohm

They say that when King George was dying, a special form of prayer for his recovery, composed by one of the Archbishops, was read aloud to him, and that his Majesty, after saying Amen "thrice, with great fervour," begged that his thanks might be conveyed to its author. To the student of royalty in modern times there is something rather suggestive in this incident. I like to think of the drug-scented room at Windsor, and of the King, livid and immobile among his pillows, waiting, in superstitious awe, for the near moment when he must stand, a spirit, in the presence of a perpetual King. I like to think of him following the futile prayer with eyes and lips, and then, custom resurgent in him and a touch of pride that, so long as the blood moved ever so little in his veins, he was still a king, expressing a desire that the dutiful feeling and admirable taste of the Prelate should receive a suitable acknowledgment. It would have been impossible for a real monarch like George, even after the gout had turned his thoughts heavenward, really to abase himself before his Maker. But he could, so to say, treat with him, as he might have treated with a fellow-sovereign, long after diplomacy was quite useless. How strange it must be to be a king! How delicate and difficult a task it is to judge him! So far as

as I know, no fair attempt has been made to form an estimate of George the Fourth. The hundred and one eulogies and lampoons, published irresponsibly during and immediately after his reign, are not worth a wooden hoop in Hades. Mr. Percy Fitzgerald has published a history of George's reign, in which he has so artistically subordinated his own personality to his subject, that I can scarcely find from beginning to end of the two bulky volumes a single opinion expressed, a single idea, a single deduction from the admirably arranged facts. All that most of us know of George is from Thackeray's brilliant denunciation. Now, I yield to few in my admiration of Thackeray's powers. He had a charming style. We never find him searching for the *mot juste* as for a needle in a bottle of hay. Could he have looked through a certain window by the river at Croisset, or in the quadrangle at Brasenose, how he would have laughed! He blew on his pipe, and words came tripping round him, like children, like pretty little children who are perfectly drilled for the dance, or came, did he will it, treading in their precedence, like kings, gloomily. And I think it is to the credit of the reading mob that, by reason of his beautiful style, all that he said was taken for the truth, without questioning. But truth after all is eternal, and style transient, and now that Thackeray's style is becoming, if I may say so, a trifle 1860, it may not be amiss that we should inquire whether his estimate of George is in substance and fact worth anything at all. It seems to me that, as in his novels, so in his history of the four Georges, Thackeray made no attempt at psychology. He dealt simply with types. One George he insisted upon regarding as a buffoon, another as a yokel. The Fourth George he chose to hold up for reprobation as a drunken, vapid cad. Every action, every phase of his life that went to disprove this view, he either

suppressed

suppressed or distorted utterly. "History," he would seem to have chuckled, "has nothing to do with the First Gentleman. But I will give him a niche in Natural History. He shall be king of the Beasts." He made no allowance for the extraordinary conditions under which any monarch finds himself, none for the unfortunate circumstances by which George was from the first hampered. He judged him as he judged Barnes Newcome and all the scoundrels he created. Moreover, he judged him by the moral standard of the Victorian Age. In fact he applied to his subject the wrong method in the wrong manner, and at the wrong time. And yet every one has taken him at his word. I feel that my essay may be scouted as a paradox; but I hope that many may recognise that I am not, out of mere boredom, endeavouring to stop my ears against popular platitude, but rather, in a spirit of real earnestness, to point out to the mob how it has been cruel to George. I do not despair of success. I think I shall make converts. For the mob is notoriously fickle, and so occasionally cheers the truth.

None, at all events, will deny that England to-day stands otherwise than she stood a hundred and thirty-two years ago, when George was born. We to-day are living a decadent life. All the while that we are prating of progress, we are really so deteriorate! There is nothing but feebleness in us. Our youths who spend their days in trying to build up their constitutions by sport or athletics, and their evenings in undermining them with poisonous and dyed drinks, our daughters who are ever searching for some new quack remedy for new imaginary megrim, what strength is there in them? We have our societies for the prevention of this and the promotion of that and the propagation of the other, because there are no individuals among us. Our sexes are already nearly assimilate. Real women are becoming nearly as rare as real ladies, and

and it is only at the music halls that we are privileged to see strong men. We are born into a poor, weak age. We are not strong enough to be wicked, and the Nonconformist Conscience makes cowards of us all.

But this was not so in the days when George was walking by his tutor's side in the gardens of Kew or of Windsor. London must have been a splendid place in those days—full of life and colour and wrong and revelry. There was no absurd press nor vestry to see that everything should be neatly ordered, nor to protect the poor at the expense of the rich. Every man had to shift for himself and, in consequence, men were, as Mr. Clement Scott would say, manly, and women, as Mr. Clement Scott would say, womanly. A young man of wealth and family in that period found open to him a vista of such license as had been unknown to any since the barbatuli of the Roman Empire. To spend the early morning with his valet, gradually assuming the rich apparel that was not then tabooed by a false sumptuary standard; to saunter round to White's for ale and tittle-tattle and the making of wagers; to attend a "drunken déjeûner" in honour of "la très belle Rosaline" or the Strappini; to drive a friend out into the country in his pretty curricle, "followed by two well-dressed and well-mounted grooms, of singular elegance certainly," and stop at every tavern on the road to curse the host for not keeping better ale and a wench of more charm; to reach St. James' in time for a random toilet and so off to dinner. Which of *our* dandies could survive a day of pleasures such as this? Which would be ready, dinner done, to scamper off again to Ranelagh and dance and skip and sup in the rotunda there? Yet the youth of this period would not dream of going to bed before he had looked in at White's or Crockford's for a few hours' faro.

This was the kind of life that young George found opened to him,

him, when, in his nineteenth year, he at length was given an establishment of his own in Buckingham House. How his young eyes must have sparkled, and with what glad gasps must he have taken the air of freedom into his lungs. Rumour had long been busy with the confounded surveillance under which his childhood had been passed. A paper of the time says significantly that "the Prince of Wales, with a spirit which does him honour, has three times requested a change in that system." For a long time King George had postponed permission for his son to appear at any balls, and the year before had only given it, lest he should offend the Spanish Minister, who begged it as a personal favour. I know few pictures more pathetic than that of George, then an overgrown boy of fourteen, tearing the childish frill from around his neck and crying to one of the royal servants, "See how they treat me!" Childhood has always seemed to me the tragic period of life—to be subject to the most odious espionage at the one age when you never dream of doing wrong, to be deceived by your parents, thwarted of your smallest wish, oppressed by the terrors of manhood and of the world to come, and to believe, as you are told, that childhood is the only happiness known: all this is quite terrible. And all Royal children, of whom I have read, particularly George, seem to have passed through greater trials in childhood than do the children of any other class. Mr. Fitzgerald, hazarding for once an opinion, thinks that "the stupid, odious, German, sergeant-system of discipline that had been so rigorously applied, was, in fact, responsible for the blemishes of the young Prince's character." Even Thackeray, in his essay upon George III., asks what wonder that the son, finding himself free at last, should have plunged, without looking, into the vortex of dissipation. In Torrens's "Life of Lord Melbourne" we learn that Lord Essex, riding one day with the King, met the young prince wearing a wig, and that the culprit, being sternly

sternly reprimanded by his father, replied that he had "been ordered by his doctor to wear a wig, for he was subject to cold." Whereupon the King, whether to vent the aversion he already felt for his son or in complacence at the satisfactory result of his discipline, turned to Lord Essex and remarked, "A lie is ever ready when it is wanted." George never lost this early-engrained habit of lies. It is to George's childish fear of his guardians that we must trace that extraordinary power of bamboozling his courtiers, his ministry and his mistresses that distinguished him through his long life. It is characteristic of the man that he should himself have bitterly deplored his own untruthfulness. When, in after years, he was consulting Lady Spencer upon the choice of a governess for his child he made this remarkable speech, "Above all, she must be taught the truth. You know that I don't speak the truth and my brothers don't, and I find it a great defect, from which I would have my daughter free. *We have been brought up badly, the Queen having taught us to equivocate.*" You may laugh at the picture of the little chubby, curly-heeded fellows learning to equivocate at their mother's knee, but you must remember that the wisest master of ethics himself, in his theory of ἕξεις ἀποδεικτικαι, similarly raised virtues, such as telling the truth, to the level of regular accomplishments, and before you judge poor George harshly, in his entanglements of lying, remember the cruelly unwise education he had undergone.

However much we may deplore this exaggerated tyranny, by reason of its evil effect upon his moral nature, we cannot but feel glad that it existed, to afford a piquant contrast to the life awaiting him. Had he passed through the callow dissipations of Eton and Oxford, like other young men of his age, he would assuredly have lacked much of that splendid pent vigour with which he rushed headlong into London life. He was so young and so handsome,

and

and so strong, that can we wonder if all the women fell at his feet? "The graces of his person," says one whom he honoured by an intrigue, "the irresistible sweetness of his smile, the tenderness of his melodious, yet manly voice, will be remembered by me till every vision of this changing scene are forgotten. The polished and fascinating ingenuousness of his manners contributed not a little to enliven our promenade. He sang with exquisite taste, and the tones of his voice, breaking on the silence of the night, have often appeared to my entranced senses like more than mortal melody." But besides his graces of person, he had a most delightful wit, he was a scholar who could bandy quotations with Fox or Sheridan; and, like the young men of to-day, he knew all about Art. He spoke French, Italian, and German perfectly, and Crossdill had taught him the violoncello. At first, as was right for one of his age, he cared more for the pleasures of the table and of the ring, for cards and love. He was wont to go down to Ranelagh surrounded by a retinue of bruisers—rapscallions, such as used to follow Clodius through the streets of Rome, and he loved to join in the scuffles like any commoner. He learnt to box from Angelo, and was considered by some to be a fine performer. On one occasion, too, at an *exposition d'escrime*, he handled the foils against the *maître*, and "was highly complimented upon his graceful postures." In fact, in spite of his accomplishments, he seems to have been a thoroughly manly young fellow. He was just the kind of figure-head Society had long been in need of. A certain lack of tone had crept into the amusements of the *haut monde*, and this was doubtless due to the lack of an acknowledged leader. The King was not yet mad, but he was always bucolic, and socially out of the question. So at the coming of his son Society broke into a gallop. Balls and masquerades were given in his honour night after night. Good Samaritans must have

approved when they found that at these entertainments great ladies and courtesans brushed beautiful shoulders in utmost familiarity, but those who delighted in the high charm of society doubtless shook their heads. We need not, however, find it a flaw in George's social bearing that he did not check this kind of freedom. At the first, as a young man full of life, of course he took everything as it came, joyfully. No one knew better than he did, in later life, that there is a time for laughing with great ladies and a time for laughing with courtesans. But as yet it was not possible for him to exert influence. How great that influence became I will indicate later on.

I like to think of him as he was at this period, charging about, in pursuit of pleasure, like a young bull. The splendid taste for building had not yet come to him. His father would not hear of him patronising the turf. But already he was implected with a passion for dress, and seems to have erred somewhat on the side of dressing up, as is the way of young men. It is fearful to think of him, as Cyrus Redding saw him, "arrayed in deep-brown velvet, silver embroidered, with cut-steel buttons, and a gold net thrown over all." Before that "gold net thrown over all," all the mistakes of his after-life seem to me to grow almost insignificant. Time, however, toned his too florid sense of costume, and we should at any rate be thankful that his imagination never deserted him. All the delightful munditiæ that we find in the contemporary "fashion-plates for gentlemen" can be traced to George himself. His were the much-approved "quadruple stock of great dimension," the "cocked grey-beaver," the pantaloons of mauve silk "negligently crinkled" and any number of other little pomps and foibles of the kind. As he grew older and was obliged to abandon many of his more vigorous pastimes, he grew more and more enamoured of the pleasures of the wardrobe. He would spend

spend hours, it is said, in designing coats for his friends and liveries for his servants, and even uniforms. Nor did he ever make the mistake of giving away outmoded clothes to his valets, but kept them to form what must have been the finest collection of clothes that has been seen in modern times. With a sentimentality that is characteristic of him he would often, as he sat, crippled by gout, in his room at Windsor, direct his servant to bring him this or that coat, which he had worn ten or twenty or thirty years before, and, when it was brought to him, spend much time in laughing or sobbing over the memories that lay in its folds. It is pleasant to know that George, during his long and various life, never forgot a coat, however long ago worn, however seldom.

But in the early days of which I speak he had not yet touched that self-conscious note which, in manner and mode of life, as well as in costume, he was to touch later. He was too violently enamoured of all around him to think very deeply of himself. But he had already realised the tragedy of the voluptuary, which is, after a little time, not that he must go on living, but that he cannot live in two places at once. We have, at this end of the century, tempered this tragedy by the perfection of railways, and it is possible for that splendid exemplar of the delectable life, our good Prince, whom Heaven bless, to waken to the sound of the Braemar bagpipes, while the music of Mdlle. Guilbert's latest song, cooed over the footlights of the Concerts Parisiens, still rings in his ears. But in the time of our Prince's illustrious great-uncle there were not railways; and we find George perpetually driving, for wagers, to Brighton and back (he had already acquired that taste for Brighton which was one of his most loveable qualities) in incredibly short periods of time. The rustics who lived along the road were well accustomed to the sight of a high, tremulous phaeton,

phaeton, flashing past them, and the crimson face of the young prince bending over the horses. There is something absurd in representing George as, even before he came of age, a hardened and cynical profligate, an Elagabalus in trousers. His blood flowed fast enough through his veins. All his escapades were those of a healthful young man of the time. Need we blame him if he sought, every day, to live faster and more fully?

In a brief essay like this, I cannot attempt to write, as I hope one day to do, in any detail a history of George's career, during the time when he was successively Prince of Wales and Regent and King. Merely is it my wish at present to examine some of the principal accusations that have been brought against him, and to point out in what ways he has been harshly and hastily judged. Perhaps the greatest indignation against him was, and is to this day, felt by reason of his treatment of his two wives, Mrs. Fitzherbert and Queen Caroline. There are some scandals that never grow old, and I think the story of George's married life is one of them. I can feel it. It has vitality. Often have I wondered whether the blood with which the young Prince's shirt was covered when Mrs. Fitzherbert first was induced to visit him at Carlton House, was merely red paint, or if, in a frenzy of love, he had truly gashed himself with a razor. Certain it is that his passion for the virtuous and obdurate lady was a very real one. Lord Holland describes how the Prince used to visit Mrs. Fox, and there indulge in "the most extravagant expressions and actions—rolling on the floor, striking his forehead, tearing his hair, falling into hysterics, and swearing that he would abandon the country, forego the crown, &c." He was indeed still a child, for royalties, not being ever brought into contact with the realities of life, remain young longer than most people. He had a truly royal lack of self-control, and

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was unable to bear the idea of being thwarted in any wish. Every day he sent off couriers to Holland, whither Mrs. Fitzherbert had retreated, imploring her to return to him, offering her formal marriage. At length, as we know, she yielded to his importunity and returned. It is difficult indeed to realise exactly what was Mrs. Fitzherbert's feeling in the matter. The marriage must be, as she knew, illegal, and would lead, as Charles James Fox pointed out in his powerful letter to the Prince, to endless and intricate difficulties. For the present she could only live with him as his mistress. If, when he reached the legal age of twenty-five, he were to apply to Parliament for permission to marry her, how could permission be given, when she had been living with him irregularly? Doubtless, she was flattered by the attentions of the Heir to the Throne, but, had she really returned his passion, she would surely have preferred "any other species of connection with His Royal Highness to one leading to so much misery and mischief." Really to understand her marriage, one must look at the portraits of her that are extant. That beautiful and silly face explains much. One can well fancy such a lady being pleased to live after the performance of a mock-ceremony with a prince for whom she felt no passion. Her view of the matter can only have been social, for, in the eyes of the Church, she could only live with the Prince as his mistress. Society, however, once satisfied that a ceremony of some kind had been enacted, never regarded her as anything but his wife. The day after Fox, inspired by the Prince, had formally denied that any ceremony had taken place, "the knocker of her door," to quote her own complacent phrase, "was never still." The Duchesses of Portland, Devonshire, and Cumberland were among her visitors.

Now, much pop-limbo has been talked about the Prince's denial of the marriage. I grant that it was highly improper to

to marry Mrs. Fitzherbert at all. But George was always weak and wayward, and he did, in his great passion, marry her. That he should afterwards deny it officially seems to me to have been utterly inevitable. His denial did her not the faintest damage, as I have pointed out. It was, so to speak, an official quibble, rendered necessary by the circumstances of the case. Not to have denied the marriage in the House of Commons would have meant ruin to both of them. As months passed, more serious difficulties awaited the unhappily wedded pair. The story of the Prince's great debts and desperation need not be repeated. It was clear that there was but one way of getting his head above water, and that was to yield to his father's wishes and contract a real marriage with a foreign princess. Fate was dogging his footsteps relentlessly. Placed as he was, George could not but offer to marry, as his father willed. It is well, also, to remember that George was not ruthlessly and suddenly turning his shoulder upon Mrs. Fitzherbert. For some time before the British plenipotentiary went to fetch him a bride from over the waters, his name had been associated with that of the beautiful and unscrupulous Countess of Jersey.

Poor George! Half-married to a woman whom he no longer worshipped, compelled to marry a woman whom he was to hate at first sight! Surely we should not judge a prince harshly. "Princess Caroline very *gauche* at cards," "Princess Caroline very *missish* at supper," are among the entries made in his diary by Lord Malmesbury while he was at the little German Court. I can conceive no scene more tragic than that of her presentation to the Prince, as related by the same nobleman. "I, accordingly to the established etiquette," so he writes, "introduced the Princess Caroline to him. She, very properly, in consequence of my saying it was the right mode of proceeding, attempted to kneel

kneel to him. He raised her gracefully enough, and embraced her, said barely one word, turned round, retired to a distant part of the apartment, and, calling to me, said: 'Harris, I am not well: pray get me a glass of brandy.'" At dinner that evening, in the presence of her betrothed, the Princess was "flippant, rattling, affecting wit." Poor George, I say again! Deportment was his ruling passion, and his bride did not know how to behave. Vulgarity—hard, implacable, German vulgarity—was in everything she did to the very day of her death. The marriage was solemnised on Wednesday, April 8th, 1795, and the royal bridegroom was drunk.

So soon as they were separated, George became implected with a morbid hatred for his wife, that was hardly in accord with his light and variant nature, and shows how bitterly he had been mortified by his marriage of necessity. It is sad that so much of his life should have been wasted in futile strainings after divorce. Yet we can scarcely blame him for seizing upon every scrap of scandal that was whispered of his wife. Besides his not unnatural wish to be free, it was derogatory to the dignity of a Prince and a Regent that his wife should be living an eccentric life at Blackheath with a family of singers named Sapio. Indeed, Caroline's conduct during this time was as indiscreet as ever. Wherever she went she made ribald jokes about her husband, "in such a voice that all, by-standing, might hear." "After dinner," writes one of her servants, "Her Royal Highness made a wax figure as usual, and gave it an amiable pair of large horns; then took three pins out of her garment and stuck them through and through, and put the figure to roast and melt at the fire. What a silly piece of spite! Yet it is impossible not to laugh when one sees it done." Imagine the feelings of the First Gentleman in Europe when such pranks were whispered to him!

For

For my own part, I fancy Caroline was innocent of any infidelity to her unhappy husband. But that is neither here nor there. Her behaviour was certainly not above suspicion. It fully justified him in trying to establish a case for her divorce. When, at length, she went abroad, her vagaries were such that the whole of her English suite left her, and we hear of her travelling about the Holy Land attended by another family, named Bergami. When her husband succeeded to the throne, and her name was struck out of the liturgy, she despatched expostulations in absurd English to Lord Liverpool. Receiving no answer, she decided to return and claim her right to be crowned Queen of England. Whatever the unhappy lady did, she always was ridiculous. One cannot but smile as one reads of her posting along the French roads in a yellow travelling-chariot drawn by cart-horses, with a retinue that included an alderman, a reclaimed lady-in-waiting, an Italian Count, the eldest son of the alderman, and "a fine little female child, about three years old, whom her Majesty, in conformity with her benevolent practices on former occasions, had adopted." The breakdown of her impeachment, and her acceptance of an income, formed a fitting anti-climax to the terrible absurdities of her position. She died from the effects of a chill caught when she was trying vainly to force a way to her husband's coronation. Unhappy woman! Our sympathy for her is not misplaced. Fate wrote her a most tremendous tragedy, and she played it in tights. Let us pity her, but not forget to pity her husband, the King, also. It is another common accusation against George that he was an undutiful and unfeeling son. If this was so, it is certain that not all the blame is to be laid upon him alone. There is more than one anecdote which shows that King George disliked his eldest son, and took no trouble to conceal his dislike, long before the

boy

boy had been freed from his tutors. It was the coldness of his father and the petty restrictions he loved to enforce that first drove George to seek the companionship of such men as the Duke of Cumberland and the Duc d'Orléans, each of whom were quick to inflame his impressionable mind to angry resentment. Yet when Margaret Nicholson attempted the life of the King, the Prince immediately posted off from Brighton that he might wait upon his father at Windsor—a graceful act of piety that was rewarded by his father's refusal to see him. Hated by the Queen, who at this time did all she could to keep her husband and his son apart, surrounded by intriguers, who did all they could to set him against his father, George seems to have behaved with great discretion. In the years that follow, I can conceive no position more difficult than that in which he found himself every time his father relapsed into lunacy. That he should have by every means opposed those who through jealousy stood between him and the regency was only natural. It cannot be said that at any time did he show anxiety to rule, so long as there was any immediate chance of the King's recovery. On the contrary, all impartial seers of that chaotic Court agreed that the Prince bore himself throughout the intrigues, wherein he himself was bound to be, in a notably filial way.

There are many things that I regret in the career of George IV., and what I most of all regret is the part that he played in the politics of the period. Englishmen to-day have at length decided that royalty shall not set foot in the political arena. I do not despair that some day we shall place politics upon a sound commercial basis, as they have already done in America and France, or leave them entirely in the hands of the police, as they do in Russia. It is horrible to think that under our existing *régime* all the men of noblest blood and highest intellect should waste

waste their time in the sordid atmosphere of the House of Commons, listening for hours to nonentities talking nonsense, or searching enormous volumes to prove that somebody said something some years ago that does not quite tally with something he said the other day, or standing tremulous before the whips in the lobbies and the scorpions in the constituencies. In the political machine are crushed and lost all our best men. That Mr. Gladstone did not choose to be a cardinal is a blow under which the Roman Catholic Church still staggers. In Mr. Chamberlain Scotland Yard missed its smartest detective. What a fine voluptuary might Lord Rosebery have been! It is a platitude that the country is ruled best by the permanent officials, and I look forward to the time when Mr. Keir Hardie shall hang his cap in the hall of No. 10 Downing Street, and a Conservative working man shall lead her Majesty's Opposition. In the lifetime of George, politics were not a whit finer than they are to-day. I feel a genuine indignation that he should have wasted so much of tissue in mean intrigues about ministries and bills. That he should have been fascinated by that splendid fellow, Fox, is quite right. That he should have thrown himself with all his heart into the storm of the Westminster election is most natural. But it is inverideed sad to find him, long after he had reached man's estate, indulging in back-stair intrigues with Whigs and Tories. It is, of course, absurd to charge him with deserting his first friends, the Whigs. His love and fidelity were given, not to the Whigs, but to the men who led them. Even after the death of Fox, he did, in misplaced piety, do all he could for Fox's party. What wonder that, when he found he was ignored by the Ministry that owed its existence to him, he turned his back upon that sombre couple, the "Lords G. and G.," whom he had always hated, and went over to the Tories? Among the Tories

Tories he hoped to find men who would faithfully perform their duties and leave him leisure to live his own beautiful life. I regret immensely that his part in politics did not cease here. The state of the country and of his own finances, and also, I fear, a certain love that he had imbibed for political manipulation, prevented him from standing aside. How useless was all the finesse he displayed in the long-drawn question of Catholic Emancipation! How lamentable his terror of Lord Wellesley's rude dragooning! And is there not something pitiable in the thought of the Regent at a time of ministerial complications lying prone on his bed with a sprained ankle, and taking, as was whispered, in one day as many as seven hundred drops of laudanum? Some said he took these doses to deaden the pain. But others, and among them his brother Cumberland, declared that the sprain was all a sham. I hope it was. The thought of a voluptuary in pain is very terrible. In any case, I cannot but feel angry, for George's own sake and that of his kingdom, that he found it impossible to keep further aloof from the wearisome troubles of political life. His wretched indecision of character made him an easy prey to unscrupulous ministers, while his extraordinary diplomatic powers and almost extravagant tact made them, in their turn, an easy prey to him. In these two processes much of his genius was uselessly spent. I must confess that he did not quite realise where his duties ended. He wished always to do too much. If you read his repeated appeals to his father that he might be permitted to serve actively in the British army against the French, you will acknowledge that it was through no fault of his own that he did not fight. It touches me to think that in his declining years he actually thought that he had led one of the charges at Waterloo. He would often describe the whole scene as it appeared to him at that supreme moment,

moment, and refer to the Duke of Wellington, saying, "Was it not so, Duke?" "I have often heard you say so, your Majesty," the old soldier would reply, grimly. I am not sure that the old soldier was at Waterloo himself. In a room full of people he once referred to the battle as having been won upon the playing-fields of Eton. This was certainly a most unfortunate slip, seeing that all historians are agreed that it was fought on a certain field situate a few miles from Brussels.

In one of his letters to the King, craving for a military appointment, George urges that, whilst his next brother, the Duke of York, commanded the army, and the younger branches of the family were either generals or lieutenant-generals, he, who was Prince of Wales, remained colonel of dragoons. And herein, could he have known it, lay the right limiting of his life. As royalty was and is constituted, it is for the younger sons to take an active part in the services, whilst the eldest son is left as the ruler of Society. Thousands and thousands of guineas were given by the nation that the Prince of Wales, the Regent, the King, might be, in the best sense of the word, ornamental. It is not for us, at this moment, to consider whether Royalty, as a wholly Pagan institution, is not out of place in a community of Christians. It is enough that we should inquire whether the god whom our grandfathers set up and worshipped and crowned with offerings, gave grace to his worshippers.

That George was a moral man, in our modern sense, I do not for one moment pretend. When he died there were found in one of his cabinets more than a hundred locks of women's hair. Some of these were still plastered with powder and pomatum, others were mere little golden curls, such as grow low down upon a girl's neck, others were streaked with grey. The whole of this collection subsequently passed into the hands of Adam, the famous Scotch

henchman

henchman of the Regent, and in his family, now resident in Glasgow, it is treasured as an heirloom. I myself have been privileged to look at all these locks of hair, and I have seen a *clairvoyante* take them one by one, and, pinching them between her lithe fingers, tell of the love that each symbolised. I have heard her tell of long rides by night, of a boudoir hung with grass-green satin, and of a tryst at Windsor; of one, the wife of a hussar at York, whose little lap-dog used to bark angrily whenever the Regent came near his mistress; of a milk-maid who, in her great simpleness, thought that her child would one day be king of England; of an arch-duchess with blue eyes, and a silly little flautist from Portugal; of women that were wantons and fought for his favour, great ladies that he loved dearly, girls that gave themselves to him humbly. If we lay all pleasures at the feet of our prince, we can scarcely hope he will remain virtuous. Indeed, we do not wish our prince to be an exemplar of godliness, but a perfect type of happiness. It may be foolish of us to insist upon apolaustic happiness, but that is the kind of happiness that we can ourselves, most of us, best understand, and so we offer it to our ideal. In Royalty we find our Bacchus, our Venus.

Certainly George was, in the practical sense of the word, a fine king. His wonderful physique, his wealth, his brilliant talents, he gave them all without stint to Society. His development from the time when, at Madame Cornely's, he gallivanted with rips and demireps, to the time when he sat, a stout and solitary old king, fishing in the artificial pond at Windsor, was beautifully ordered. During his life he indulged himself to the full in all the delights that life could offer him. That he should have, in his old age, suddenly abandoned his career of vigorous enjoyment is, I confess, rather surprising. The royal voluptuary generally remains young to the last. No one ever tires of pleasure. It is the pursuit of pleasure,

pleasure, the trouble to grasp it, that makes us old. Only the soldiers who enter Capua with wounded feet leave it demoralised. And yet George, who never had to wait or fight for a pleasure, most certainly broke up long before his death. I can but attribute this to the constant persecution to which he was subjected by duns and ministers, parents and wives.

Not that I regret the manner in which he spent his last years. On the contrary, I think it was exceedingly cosy. I like to think of the King, at Windsor, lying a-bed all the morning in his darkened room, with all the newspapers scattered over his quilt, and a little decanter of the favourite cherry-brandy within easy reach. I like to think of him sitting by his fire in the afternoon and hearing his ministers asking for him at the door and piling another log upon the fire, as he hears them sent away by his servant. After all, he had lived his life ; he had lived more fully than any other man.

And it is right that we should remember him first as a voluptuary. Only let us note that his nature never became, as do the natures of most voluptuaries, corroded by a cruel indifference to the happiness of others. When all the town was agog for the *fête* to be given by the Regent in honour of the French King, Sheridan sent a forged card of invitation to Romeo Coates, the half-witted dandy, who used at this time to walk about in absurd ribbons and buckles, and was the butt of all the streetsters. When the poor fellow arrived at the entrance of Carlton House, proud as a peacock, he was greeted with a tremendous cheer from the by-standing mob, but when he came to the lacqueys he was told that his card was a hoax, and was sent about his business. The tears were rolling down his cheeks as he shambled back into the street. The Regent heard later in the evening of this sorry joke, and next day despatched a kindly-worded message, in which he prayed that Mr. Coates

Mr. Coates would not refuse to come and "view the decorations, nevertheless." Though he does not appear to have treated his inferiors with that extreme servility that is now in vogue, George was beloved by the whole of his household, and many are the little tales that are told to illustrate the kindliness and consideration he showed to his valets and his jockeys and his stable-boys. That from time to time he dropped certain of his favourites is no cause for blaming him. Remember that a Great Personage, like a great genius, is dangerous to his fellow-creatures. The favourites of Royalty live in an intoxicant atmosphere. They become unaccountable for their behaviour. Either they get beyond themselves, and, like Brummel, forget that the King, their friend, is also their master; or they outrun the constable, and go bankrupt, or cheat at cards in order to keep up their position, or do some other foolish thing that makes it impossible for the King to favour them more. Remember, too, that old friends are generally the refuge of unsociable persons, and how great must be the temptation besetting the head of Society to form fresh friendships, when all the cleverest and most charming persons in the land are standing ready, like supers at the wings, to come on and please him. At Carlton House there was a constant succession of wits. Minds were preserved for the Prince of Wales, as coverts are preserved for him to-day. For him Sheridan would say his best bon-mot, and Theodore Hook contrive his most practical jokes, his swiftest chansonette. And Fox would talk, as only he could, of Liberty and of Patriotism, and Byron would look more than ever like Isidore de Lara as he recited his own bad verses, and Sir Walter Scott would "pour out with an endless generosity his store of old-world learning, kindness, and humour." Of such men George was a splendid patron. He did not merely sit in his chair, gaping princely at their wit and their wisdom, but quoted with the scholars

scholars, and argued with the statesmen, and jested with the wits. Doctor Burney, an impartial observer, says that he was amazed by the knowledge of music that the Regent displayed in a half-hour's discussion over the wine. Croker says that "the Prince and Scott were the two most brilliant story-tellers, in their several ways, he had ever happened to meet. Both exerted themselves, and it was hard to say which shone the most." The Prince seems indeed to have been a fine conversationalist, with a wide range of knowledge and great humour. We, who have come at length to look upon stupidity as one of the most sacred prerogatives of Royalty, can scarcely realise that, if George's birth had been never so humble, he would have been known to us as a fine scholar and wit or as a connoisseur of the arts. It is pleasing to think of his love for the Flemish school of painting, for Wilkie and Sir Thomas Lawrence. The splendid portraits of foreign potentates that hang in the Banqueting Room at Windsor bear witness to his sense of the canvas. In his later years he exerted himself strenuously in raising the tone of the drama. His love of the classics never left him. We know he was fond of quoting those incomparable poets, Homer, at great length, and that he was prominent in the "papyrus-craze." Indeed, he inspired Society with a love of something more than mere pleasure, a love of the "humaner delights." He was a giver of tone. The bluff, disgusting ways of the Tom and Jerry period gave way to those florid graces that are still called Georgian.

A pity that George's predecessor was not a man, like the Prince Consort, of strong chastening influence! Then might the bright flamboyance which George gave to Society have made his reign more beautiful than any other—a real renaissance. But he found London a wild city of taverns and cock-pits, and the grace which in the course of years he gave to his subjects never really entered into

into them. The cock-pits were gilded and the taverns painted with colour, but the heart of the city was vulgar, even as before. The simulation of higher things did indeed give the note of a very interesting period, but how shallow that simulation was, and how merely it was due to George's own influence, we may see in the light of what happened after his death. The good that he had done died with him. The refinement he had laid upon vulgarity fell away, like enamel from withered cheeks. It was only George himself who had made the sham endure. The Victorian Era came soon, and the angels rushed in and drove the nymphs away and hung the land with reps.

I have often wondered whether it was with a feeling that his influence would be no more than life-long, that George allowed Carlton House, that dear structure, the very work of his life and symbol of his being, to be rased. I wish that Carlton House were still standing. I wish we could still walk through those corridors, whose walls were "crusted with ormolu," and parquet-floors were "so glossy that, were Narcissus to come down from heaven, he would, I maintain, need no other mirror for his *beauté*." I wish that we could see the pier-glasses and the girandoles and the twisted sofas, the fauns foisted upon the ceiling and the rident goddesses along the wall. These things would make George's memory dearer to us, help us to a fuller knowledge of him. I am glad that the Pavilion still stands here in Brighton. Its trite lawns and cheeky minarets have taught me much. As I write this essay, I can see them from my window. Last night I sat there in a crowd of vulgar people, whilst a band played us tunes. Once I fancied I saw the shade of a swaying figure and of a wine-red face.

Study of a Head

By an Unknown Artist

A Ballad of a Nun

By John Davidson

From Eastertide to Eastertide
For ten long years her patient knees
Engraved the stones—the fittest bride
Of Christ in all the diocese.

She conquered every earthly lust;
The abbess loved her more and more;
And, as a mark of perfect trust,
Made her the keeper of the door.

High on a hill the convent hung
Across a duchy looking down,
Where everlasting mountains flung
Their shadows over tower and town.

The jewels of their lofty snows
In constellations flashed at night;
Above their crests the moon arose;
The deep earth shuddered with delight.

Long

A Ballad of a Nun

Long ere she left her cloudy bed,
  Still dreaming in the orient land,
On many a mountain's happy head
  Dawn lightly laid her rosy hand.

The adventurous sun took Heaven by storm;
  Clouds scattered largesses of rain;
The sounding cities rich and warm,
  Smouldered and glittered in the plain.

Sometimes it was a wandering wind,
  Sometimes the fragrance of the pine,
Sometimes the thought how others sinned,
  That turned her sweet blood into wine.

Sometimes she heard a serenade
  Complaining sweetly far away:
She said, "A young man woos a maid";
  And dreamt of love till break of day.

Then would she ply her knotted scourge
  Until she swooned; but evermore
She had the same red sin to purge,
  Poor, passionate keeper of the door!

For still night's starry scroll unfurled,
  And still the day came like a flood:
It was the greatness of the world
  That made her long to use her blood.

In winter-time when Lent drew nigh,
And hill and plain were wrapped in snow,
She watched beneath the frosty sky
The nearest city nightly glow.

Like peals of airy bells outworn
Faint laughter died above her head
In gusts of broken music borne:
"They keep the Carnival," she said.

Her hungry heart devoured the town:
"Heaven save me by a miracle!
Unless God sends an angel down,
Thither I go though it were Hell."

She dug her nails deep in her breast,
Sobbed, shrieked, and straight withdrew the bar:
A fledgling flying from the nest,
A pale moth rushing to a star.

Fillet and veil in strips she tore;
Her golden tresses floated wide;
The ring and bracelet that she wore
As Christ's betrothed, she cast aside.

"Life's dearest meaning I shall probe;
Lo! I shall taste of love at last!
Away!" She doffed her outer robe,
And sent it sailing down the blast.

Her body seemed to warm the wind ;
With bleeding feet o'er ice she ran :
"I leave the righteous God behind ;
I go to worship sinful man."

She reached the sounding city's gate ;
No question did the warder ask :
He passed her in : "Welcome, wild mate !"
He thought her some fantastic mask.

Half-naked through the town she went ;
Each footstep left a bloody mark ;
Crowds followed her with looks intent ;
Her bright eyes made the torches dark.

Alone and watching in the street
There stood a grave youth nobly dressed ;
To him she knelt and kissed his feet ;
Her face her great desire confessed.

Straight to his house the nun he led :
"Strange lady, what would you with me ?"
"Your love, your love, sweet lord," she said ;
"I bring you my virginity."

He healed her bosom with a kiss ;
She gave him all her passion's hoard ;
And sobbed and murmured ever, "This
Is life's great meaning, dear, my lord.

"I care

"I care not for my broken vow,
Though God should come in thunder soon;
I am sister to the mountains now,
And sister to the sun and moon."

Through all the towns of Belmarie,
She made a progress like a queen.
"She is," they said, "whate'er she be,
The strangest woman ever seen.

"From fairyland she must have come,
Or else she is a mermaiden."
Some said she was a ghoul, and some
A heathen goddess born again.

But soon her fire to ashes burned;
Her beauty changed to haggardness;
Her golden hair to silver turned;
The hour came of her last caress.

At midnight from her lonely bed
She rose, and said: "I have had my will."
The old ragged robe she donned, and fled
Back to the convent on the hill.

Half-naked as she went before,
She hurried to the city wall,
Unnoticed in the rush and roar
And splendour of the Carnival.

"No

No question did the warder ask :
Her ragged robe, her shrunken limb,
Her dreadful eyes ! "It is no mask ;
It is a she-wolf, gaunt and grim ! "

She ran across the icy plain ;
Her worn blood curdled in the blast ;
Each footstep left a crimson stain ;
The white-faced moon looked on aghast.

She said between her chattering jaws,
"Deep peace is mine, I cease to strive ;
Oh, comfortable convent laws,
That bury foolish nuns alive !

"A trowel for my passing-bell,
A little bed within the wall,
A coverlet of stones ; how well
I there shall keep the Carnival ! "

Like tired bells chiming in their sleep,
The wind faint peals of laughter bore ;
She stopped her ears and climbed the steep,
And thundered at the convent door.

It opened straight : she entered in,
And at the wardress' feet fell prone :
"I come to purge away my sin,
Bury me, close me up in stone."

The wardress raised her tenderly ;
She touched her wet and fast-shut eyes ;
"Look, sister ; sister, look at me ;
Look ; can you see through my disguise ? "

She looked and saw her own sad face,
And trembled, wondering, "Who art thou ? "
"God sent me down to fill your place :
I am the Virgin Mary now."

And with the word, God's mother shone ;
The wanderer whispered, "Mary, hail ! "
The vision helped her to put on
Bracelet and fillet, ring and veil.

"You are sister to the mountains now,
And sister to the day and night ;
Sister to God ; " and on the brow
She kissed her thrice, and left her sight.

While dreaming in her cloudy bed,
Far in the crimson orient land,
On many a mountain's happy head
Dawn lightly laid her rosy hand.

The Yellow Book

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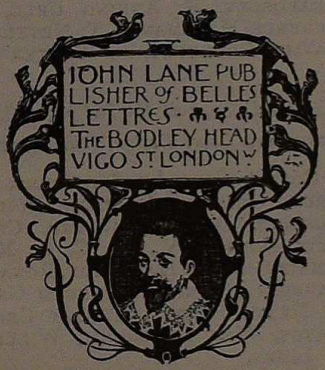

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